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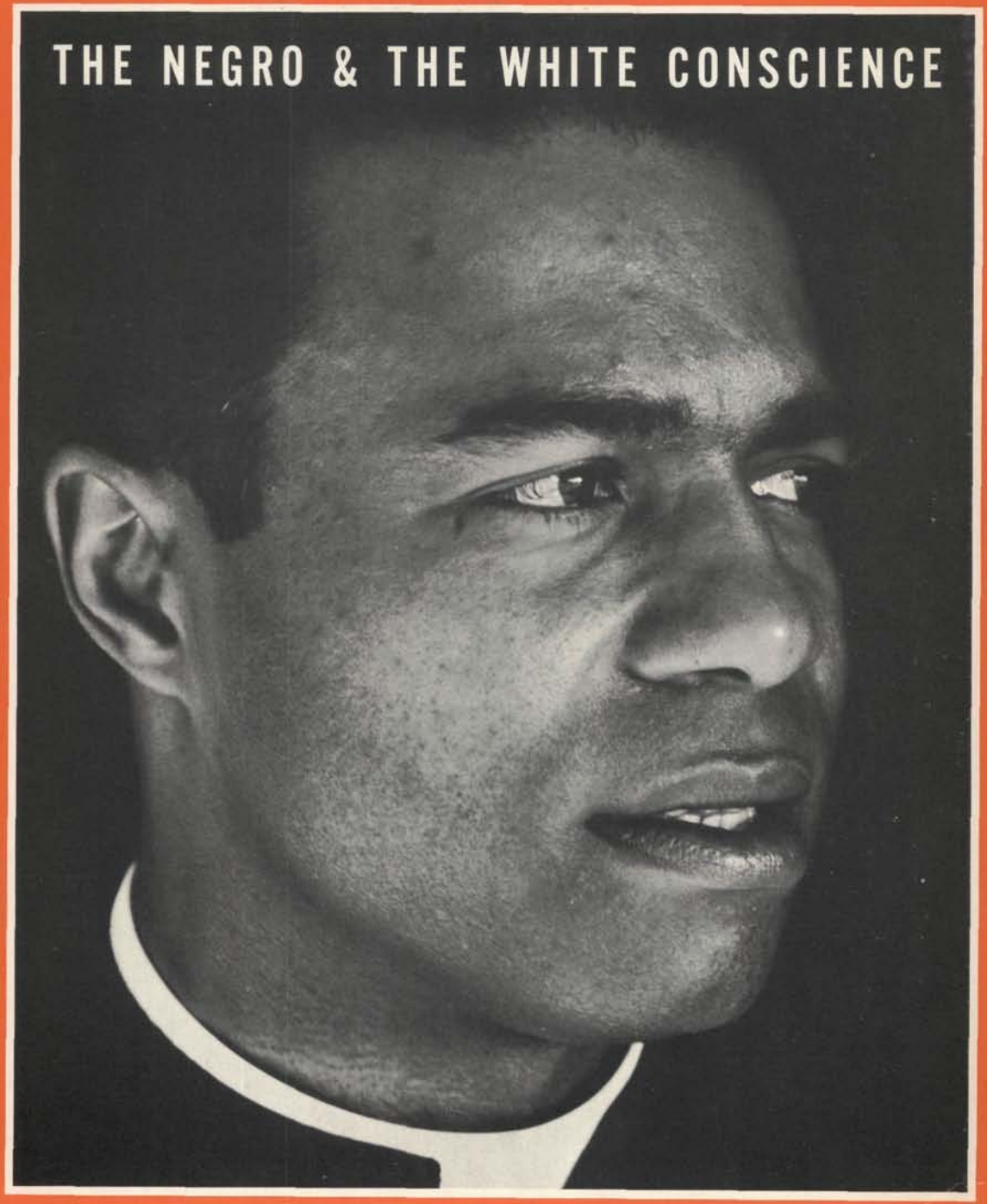

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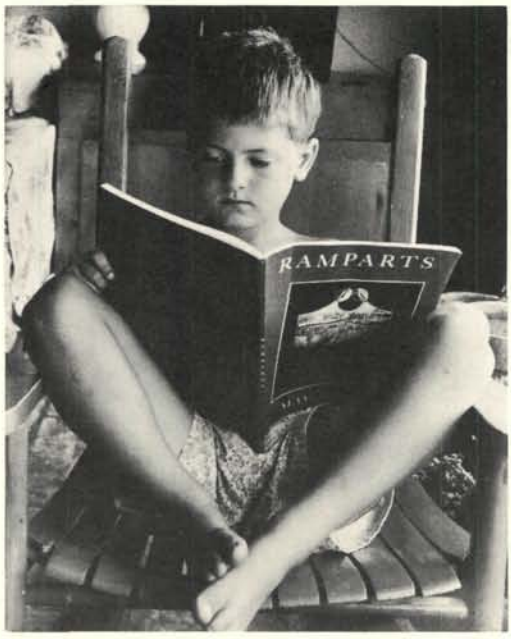

RAMPARTS

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SYMPOSIUM

THE BLACK REVOLUTION:
LETTERS TO A WHITE LIBERAL 4
by Thomas Merton

DIALOGUE 24
Father August Thompson & John Howard Griffin

JOURNAL OF A TRIP SOUTH 35
by John Howard Griffin

FAULKNER ON RACE 43
by Bradford Daniel

THE MARGINAL MAN 50
by Thomas N. Williams

POETRY

THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD AS PICTURES 57
by Nancy Sullivan

THE POET IS DEAD 85
by Brother Antoninus

FICTION

TO GLORIA 64
by Maude Hutchins

PORTRAIT

ANDREW WYETH 69
by Paul Horgan

ART

DRAWINGS BY ANDREW WYETH 73

BOOK REVIEWS 91

COVER

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DEDICATED TO
THE MEMORY OF

Addie Mae Collins, *Age 14*

Denise McNair, *Age 11*

Carole Robertson, *Age 14*

Cynthia Wesley, *Age 14*

WHO PERISHED
WHILE IN THE
PRESENCE OF GOD

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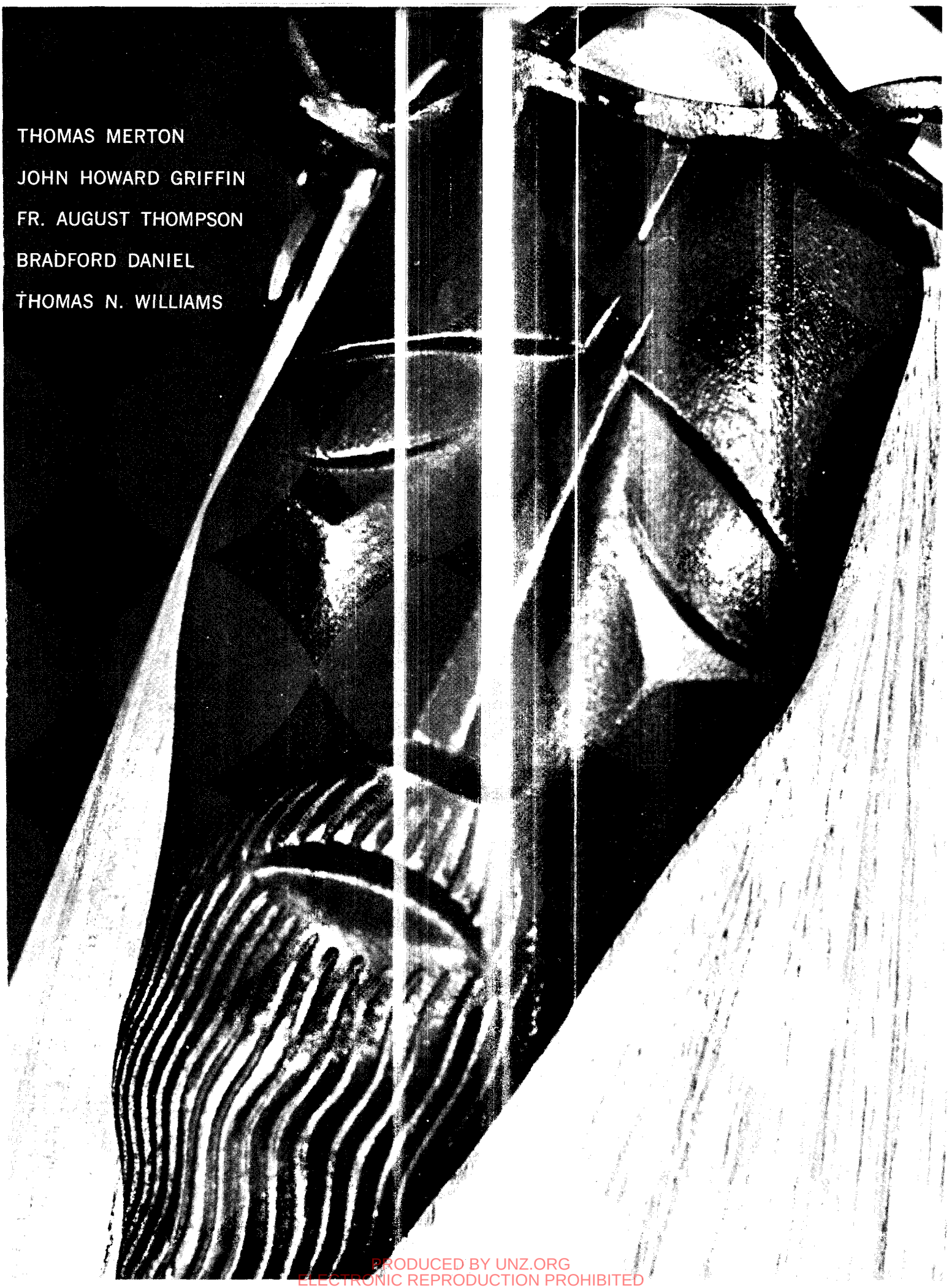

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Thomas Merton

THE BLACK REVOLUTION

Letters to a White Liberal

IF I DARE TO IMAGINE that these letters may have some significance for both of us, it is because I believe that Christianity is concerned with human crises, since Christians are called to manifest the mercy and truth of God in history.

Christianity is the victory of Christ in the world, that is to say in history. It is the salvation of man in and through history, through temporal decisions made for love of Christ the Redeemer and Lord of History. The mystery of Christ is at work in all human events, and our comprehension of secular events works itself out and expresses itself in that sacred history, the history of salvation, which the Holy Spirit teaches us to read between the lines. We have to admit that this meaning is often provisional and sometimes beyond our grasp. Yet as Christians we are committed to the attempt to see some meaning in temporal events that flow from human choices. To be specific, we are bound to search "history," that is to say the intelligible actions of men, for some indications of their significance, and *some relevance to our present choice as Christians.*

"History" then is for us that complex of meanings which we read into the interplay of acts and decisions that make civilization. And we

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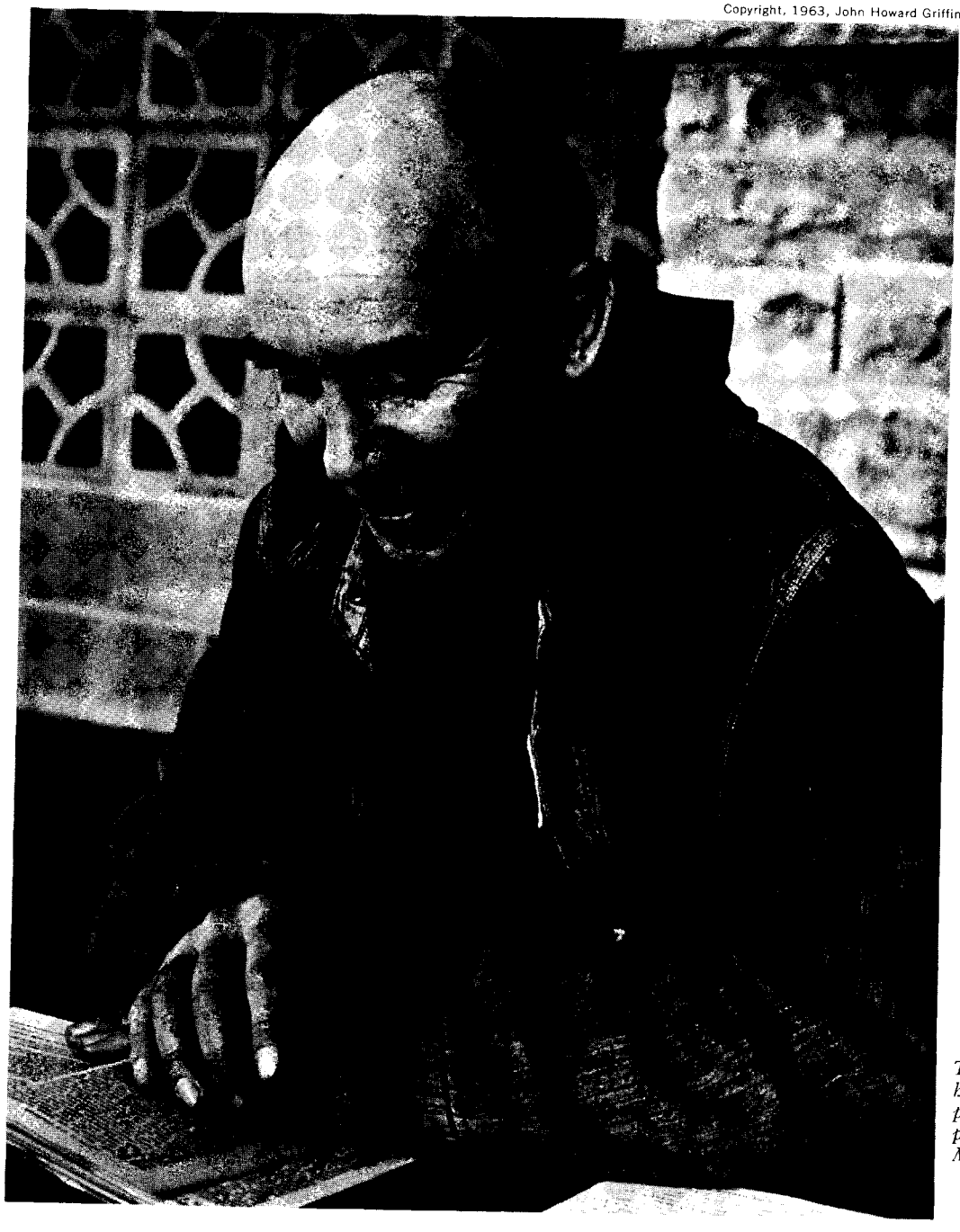

The Abbot of Gethsemani has kindly granted permission for this photograph of Thomas Merton to be published.

are also (this is more urgent still) at a turning point in the history of that European and American society which has been shaped and dominated by Christian concepts, even where it has at times been unfaithful to its basically Christian vocation. We live in a culture which seems to have reached the point of extreme hazard at which it may plunge to its own ruin, unless there is some renewal of life, some new direction, some providential reorganization of its forces for survival.

At present, in a world-wide struggle for power which is entirely pragmatic, if not cynically unprincipled, the claims of those who appeal to their Christian antecedents as justification for their struggle to maintain themselves in power, are being judged by the events which flow from their supposedly "Christian" choices.

For example, we belong to a nation which prides itself on being free, and relates this freedom to its source in Christian theology. Our freedom rests on respect for the rights of the

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human person, and though our society is not officially Christian, this respect for the person can be traced to the Christian concept that every man is to be regarded as Christ, and treated as Christ.

Briefly, then: we justify our policies, whether national or international, by the implicit postulate that we are supremely concerned with the human person and his rights. We do this because our ancestors regarded every man as Christ, and wished to treat him as Christ, or at least believed this to be the right way to act, even though they did not always follow this belief.

Now if we advance this claim, and base our decisions and choices upon it, we must not be surprised if the claim itself comes under judgment. If we assert that we are the guardians of peace, freedom, and the rights of the person, we may expect other people to question this, demanding, from time to time, some evidence that we mean what we say. Commonly they will look for that evidence in our actions. And if our actions do not fit our words, they will assume that we are either fools, deceiving ourselves, or liars attempting to deceive others.

Our claims to high-minded love of freedom and our supposed defence of Christian and personalist ideals are going to be judged, we believe, not only by other men, but above all by God. At times we are perhaps rashly inclined to find this distinction reassuring. We say to ourselves: God at least knows our sincerity. He does not suspect us as our enemies do. He sees the *reality* of our good intentions!

I am sure He sees whatever reality is there. But are we absolutely certain that He judges our intentions exactly as we do?

Let me cite an example. Our defence policies and the gigantic arms race which they require are all based on the supposition that we seek peace and freedom, not only for ourselves, but for the whole world. We claim to possess the only effective and basically sincere formula for world peace because we alone are truly honest in our claim to respect the human person. For us, the person and his freedom, with his basic rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, comes absolutely first. Therefore the sincerity and truth of all our asserted aims, at home and abroad, in defence and in civil affairs, is going to be judged by the *reality* of our respect for persons and for their rights. The rest of the world knows this very well. We seem not to have realized this as well as they.

Another example: we claim that we are really solicitous for the rights of the Negro, and willing to grant him these rights some time or other. We even insist that the very nature of our society is such that the Negro, as a person, is precisely what we respect the most. Our laws declare that we are not simply a society which tolerates the presence of the Negro as a second class citizen of whom we would prefer to rid ourselves altogether if we only could. They assert that since the Negro is a person, he is in every way equal to every other person. And our religion adds that what we do to him, we do to Christ, since we are a free society, based on respect for the dignity of the human person as taught to the world by Christianity.

How, then, do we treat this other Christ, this person, who happens to be black?

First, if we look to the South which is plentifully supplied not only with Negroes but also with professed Christian believers, we discover that belief in the Negro as a person is accepted only with serious qualifications, while the notion that he is to be treated as Christ has been completely overlooked. It would not be easy for a Christian to mutilate another man, string him up on a tree and shoot him full of holes if he believed that what he did to that man was done to Christ. On the contrary, he must somehow imagine that he is doing this to the devil—to prevent the devil doing it to him. But in thinking such thoughts, a Christian has abdicated from Christianity and has implicitly rejected that basic respect for the rights of the person on which free society depends. From then on anything such a man may say about "Christianity" or "freedom" has lost all claims to rational significance.

Only with the greatest unwillingness have some very earnest Southern Christians, under duress, accepted the painful need to ride in the

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same part of public conveyances with Negroes, eat at the same lunch counters, use the same public facilities. And there are still not a few of these Christians who absolutely refuse to worship Christ in the same congregations as Negroes. Even some Catholics have refused to receive the Body of Christ together with Negroes in sacramental communion: and they have been astonished to find themselves excommunicated officially for refusing integrated schools, when in point of fact they had already by their own action manifestly excommunicated themselves, acting purely and simply as schismatics, rending the unity of the Body of Christ.

Nevertheless, the inner conflicts and contradictions of the South are not to be taken as a justification for the smugness with which the North is doing just as poor a job, if not a worse job, of defending the Negro's rights as a person. The race "problem" is something which the southerner cannot escape. Almost half the population of the South are Negroes. Though there are greater concentrations of Negroes in northern slums, yet northern Negroes can be treated as if they were not there at all. For years, New Yorkers have been able to drive to Westchester and Connecticut without going through Harlem, or even seeing it, except from a distant freeway. The abuses thus tolerated and ignored are sometimes as bad and worse than anything in the South.

It is clear that our actual decisions and choices, with regard to the Negro, show us that we are not in fact interested in the rights of several million persons, who are members and citizens of our society and are in every way loyal Americans. They pay taxes, fight for the country and do as well as anybody else in meeting their responsibilities. And yet we tolerate shameful injustices which deprive them, by threats and by actual violence, of their right to vote and to participate actively in the affairs of the nation.

Here I can see you will protest. You will point to the Supreme Court decisions that have upheld Negro rights, to education in integrated colleges and schools. It seems to me that our motives are judged by the real fruit of our decisions. What have we done? We have been willing to grant the Negro rights on paper, even in the South. But the laws have been framed in such a way that in every case their execution has depended on the good will of white society, and the white man has *never failed*, when left to himself, to block or obstruct or simply forget the necessary action without which the rights of the Negro cannot be enjoyed in fact. Hence, when laws have been passed and then contested, and then dragged through all the courts, and then finally upheld, the Negro is still in no position to benefit by them without, in each case, entering into further interminable lawsuits every time he wants to exercise a right that is guaranteed to him by law.

In effect, we are not really giving the Negro a right to live where he likes, eat where he likes, go to school where he likes, or work where he likes, but only *to sue the white man who refuses to let him do these things*. If every time I want a Coca Cola I have to sue the owner of the snack bar, I think I will probably keep going to the same old places in my ghetto. That is what the Negro, until recently, has done. Such laws are without meaning unless they reflect a willingness on the part of white society to implement them.

You will say: "You can't legislate morality." That phrase may be quite true in its own proper context. But here it is a question not of "morality" but of a social system. If we have got to the point where the laws are frequently, if not commonly, framed in such a way that they can be easily evaded by a privileged minority, then the very structure of our society comes into question. If you are responsible for legislation that has only a dubious value, and if as a result the authority of law itself begins to be questioned, then you are partly to blame for the disorders and the confusion resulting from civil disobedience and contempt of law.

I think there is possibly some truth in the accusation that we are making laws simply because they look nice on the books. Having them there, we can enjoy the comfort of pointing to them, reassuring our own consciences, convincing ourselves that we are all that we claim to be, and refuting the vicious allegations of hostile critics who question the sincerity of our devotion to freedom.

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But at the same time, when our own personal interests and preferences are concerned, we have no intention of respecting the Negro's rights in the concrete. North or South, integration is always going to be not on our street but "somewhere else." That perhaps accounts for the extraordinary zeal with which the North insists upon integration in the South, while treating the northern Negro as if he were invisible, flatly refusing to let him take shape in full view, lest he demand the treatment due to a human person and a free citizen of this nation. That is why the Negro now insists on making himself just as obviously visible as he possibly can. That is why he demonstrates. He has come to realize that the white man is not interested in the rights of the Negro, but in the white man's own spiritual and material comfort. If then, by making himself visible, the Negro can finally disturb the white man's precious "peace of soul," then by all means he would be a fool not to do so.

Yet when we are pressed and criticized, and when the Negro's violated rights are brought up before us, we stir ourselves to renewed efforts at legislation, we introduce more bills into Congress, knowing well enough how much chance those bills have of retaining any real significance after they have finally made it, if they make it at all.

The Negro finally gets tired of this treatment and becomes quite rightly convinced that the only way he is ever going to get his rights is by fighting for them himself. But we deplore his demonstrations, we urge him to go slow, we warn him against the consequences of violence (when, at least so far, most of the organized violence has been on our side and not on his). At the same time we secretly desire violence, and even in some cases *provoke* it, in the hope that the whole Negro movement for freedom can be repressed by force.

I DO NOT CLAIM to be either a prophet or even a historian. I do not profess to understand all the mysteries of political philosophy, and I am, thank God, not a sociologist. But I question whether our claims to be the only sincere defenders of the human person, of his rights, of his dignity, of his nobility as a creature made in God's image, as a member of the Mystical Christ, can be substantiated by our actions. It seems to me that we have retained little more than a few slogans and concepts that have been emptied of reality. It seems to me that we have little genuine interest in human liberty and in the human person. What we are interested in, on the contrary, is the unlimited freedom of the corporation. When we call ourselves the "free world" we mean first of all the world in which *business* is free. And the freedom of the person comes only after that, because, in our eyes, the freedom of the person is dependent on money. That is to say, without money, freedom has no meaning. And therefore the most basic freedom of all is the freedom to make money. If you have nothing to buy or sell, freedom is, in your case, irrelevant. In other words, what we are really interested in is not *persons*, but *profits*. Our society is organized first and foremost with a view to business, and wherever we run into a choice between the rights of a human person and the advantages of a profit-making organization, the rights of the person will have difficulty getting a hearing. Profit first, people afterward.

You ask me, indignantly, to confirm these vicious allegations?

It appears that the one aspect of the Negro demonstrations that is being taken most seriously in the South is that *they hurt business*. As long as there was talk only of "rights," and of freedom" (concepts which imply *persons*), the Negro movement was taken seriously chiefly by crackpots, idealists, and members of suspicious organizations thought to be under direct control of Moscow, like the NAACP. But still, all this talk of Negro rights, especially when accompanied by hymn-singing and religious exhortations, could hardly be taken seriously.

It was only when money became involved that the Negro demonstrations finally impressed themselves upon the American mind as being real.

We claim to judge reality by the touchstone of Christian values, such as freedom, thought, the spirit, faith, personalism, etc. In actual fact we judge them by commercial values: sales, money,

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price, profits. It is not the life of the spirit that is real to us, but the vitality of the *market*. Spiritual values are to us, in actual fact, meaningless unless they can be reduced to terms of buying and selling. But buying and selling are abstract operations. Money has no ontological reality: it is a pure convention. Admittedly it is a very practical one. But it is in itself completely unreal, and the ritual that surrounds money transactions, the whole liturgy of marketing and of profit, is basically void of reality and of meaning. Yet we treat it as the final reality, the absolute meaning, in the light of which everything else is to be judged, weighed, evaluated, "priced."

Thus we end up by treating persons as objects for sale, and therefore as meaningless unless they have some value on the market. A man is to us nothing more nor less than "what he is worth." He is "known" to us as a reality when he is known to be solvent by bankers. Otherwise he has not yet begun to exist.

Our trouble is that we are alienated from our own personal reality, our true self. We do not believe in anything but money and the power or the enjoyment which come from the possession of money. We do not believe in ourselves, except in so far as we can estimate our own worth, and verify, by our operations in the world of the market, that our subjective price coincides with what society is willing to pay for us.

And the Negro? He has so far been worth little or nothing.

Until quite recently there was no place for him in our calculations, unless perhaps we were landlords — unless we had *real* estate — in Harlem. That of course was another matter, because the Negro was really quite profitable to us. And yet we did not think of profit as coming to us from the beings of flesh and blood who were crowded into those rooms. On the contrary, it came to us from the only thing that was *real* — our estate. The Negro was so shadowy, so unreal, that he was nothing more than the occasion for a series of very profitable transactions which gave us a good solid reality in our own eyes and in the eyes of our society.

But now, suddenly, we have discovered that there are also some real Negroes. For them to be real, they must have the same kind of reality as ourselves. Reality is estimated in terms of (financial) worth. And so we discover that there are a few Negroes who have money.

Why has this rich Negro suddenly earned the grace of our benevolent attention? Because he is a person, because he has brains, because of the fantastic talents which alone could enable him to be a professional success against such inhuman odds? None of this. It is now to our interest to recognize him, because we can use him against the others. So now, when the Negro claims he wants to take his full part in American society as a *person*, we retort: you already are playing your part as a person: "Negroes over the years," we now declare, "*have had a rapid rise in income*" (a nice vague statement, but it satisfies the mind of anyone who believes in money); "*Large numbers of Negroes drive high-priced cars.*" Another beautiful act of faith! But here we come with "exact figures":

"*It is estimated that there are now thirty-five Negro millionaires in the United States.*"

What are these statements supposed to mean? Simply that there is no need for the Negro to make such a fuss, to demonstrate, to fight for recognition as a person. He has *received that recognition already*. "Thirty-five Negroes are millionaires." (Thirty-five out of Twenty Million!) "Large numbers" drive "high-priced cars." What more do you want? These are indications that the Negro has all he needs, for he has "opportunities," he can make money and thus become real.

What opportunities?

Even though a Negro millionaire may live in a "fine residential neighborhood" he is still living in a ghetto, when he moves in, the whites move out. The neighborhood is taken over by Negroes, and even if they are millionaires, their presence means that a neighborhood is no longer "fine." For a white man it is no longer even "residential."

So that even when he is worth a million, a Negro cannot buy himself, in the land of the free, the respect that is given to a human person.

Doubtless the mercy and truth of God, the

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victory of Christ, are being manifested in our current history, but I am not able to see how they are manifested *by us*.

II

A LITTLE TIME, perhaps only a few more months, and we will realize that we have reached a moment of unparalleled seriousness in American history, indeed in the history of the world. The word "revolution" is getting around. Accepted at first with tolerance, as a pleasantly graphic figure of speech, it is going to be regarded with more and more disapproval, because it comes too near to the truth. And why? What is a revolution? What does it mean to say that the Negro's struggle for full civil rights amounts to a revolution?

Much as it might distress southerners, the fact that a Negro may now sit down next to a white woman at a snack bar and order a sandwich is still somewhat short of revolution. And if by dint of courageous and effective protest the Negroes who have a vote in deep southern states should actually manage to cast their votes on election day without getting shot: that in itself does not make a revolution, though it may have something radically new about it. The question is, who will they be voting for? Ross Barnett?

Yet I have often thought there is something true, as well as sinister, in the usual conservative claim to "realism." We must admit that the southern politicians are much more fully aware of the revolutionary nature of the situation than are those northern liberals who blithely suppose that somehow the Negroes (both north and south) will gradually and noiselessly "fit in" to white society exactly as it is, with its affluent economy, the mass media, its political machines, its professional thoughtlessness and its middle class suburban folkways.

We seem to think that when the Negroes of the south really begin to *use* their largely hypothetical right to vote, they will be content with the same candidates who were up last year and the year before. If those candidates themselves were under any such illusion, they would long since have done something that would get them the Negro votes.

In point of fact, the southern politicians realize very well that if the Negroes turn out full force to vote, and thereby establish themselves as a factor to be reckoned with in southern politics, the political machines of the past are going to collapse in a cloud of dust. To put it succinctly: if the southern Negro is really granted the rights which are guaranteed to him, *de jure*, by the American Constitution, and if he fully and freely exercises those rights, it is all up with the Old South. There are quite enough Negroes in the South to make any really free election catastrophic for the *status quo*. And Negroes, both south and north, are not going to waste time voting for people who sick police dogs on them and drench them with high pressure firehoses, while occasionally lobbing bombs onto their front porches for good measure.

So much for the South. But what about the North? Northern Negroes are already able to put some of their own men into office: but this is only the beginning of what is suddenly becoming a very conscious and concerted drive for real political power. This drive is going to be more and more accelerated by the problem of jobs. With five million unemployed officially acknowledged in 1963, with no indications other than that this figure *must grow*, and with repeated strikes and protests in which Negroes demand to be hired along with whites, there is going to be violent conflict over the limited number of jobs. With the best will in the world, nobody is going to be able to give jobs to Negroes without taking them away from whites, and there is no indication, at the moment, that the whites intend to retire *en masse* and spend the rest of their lives watching TV so that the Negroes may carry on the work, and collect the paychecks, of the nation.

This represents, whether we like it or not, a radical threat to our present system—a revolutionary situation. And furthermore it accentuates the already clearly defined racial lines dividing the two sides in the conflict. This means that the Negro is going to continue to be what he has decidedly become: aggressively aware of the power and impact on white society of mere *threat* of revolutionary violence.

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The Negro himself is in the presence of a social structure which he has reason to consider inherently unjust, since it has never done him any real justice except in fair words and promises. He also sees that this society has suddenly become extremely vulnerable. The very agitation and confusion which greet his demands are to him indications of guilt and fear, and he has very little respect for exhortations to "go slow" and "be patient." He feels he has been patient for a very long time and that anyone who cannot see this for himself is not being honest about it. He also feels that their is no hope of any action being taken *unless he takes action himself*, and that the steps taken by the government are mere political maneuvers leading nowhere. This means that a well-meaning liberal policy of compromises and concessions, striving at the same time to placate the Negro and to calm the seething indignation of the conservative whites, is not going to avert danger. It may, on the contrary, aggravate it. Hence the "realism" again, of the conservatives, who think that the only thing is to stop violence now by the full use of all the repressive agencies — police, national guard, army — which they themselves still fully control. After all, the traditional line of thought of those who use repressive power to defend the *status quo*, is that they are justified in applying force to prevent a chaotic and explosive outbreak of revolutionary disorder, save many lives, protect property (especially their own, of course) and maintain a semblance of national identity which would otherwise be dissolved in blood. Needless to say, this is identical with the argument which revolutionaries themselves advance for repressing all resistance once they themselves have achieved their aim and have seized full power.

Now, my friend, here is your situation. You, the well-meaning liberal, are right in the middle of all this confusion. You are, in fact, a political catalyst. On the one hand, with your good will and your ideals, your fine hopes and your generous, but vague, love of mankind in the abstract and of rights enthroned on a juridicial Olympus, you offer a certain encouragement to the Negro (and you do right, my only complaint being that you are not yet right enough) so that, abetted by you, he is emboldened to demand concessions. Though he knows you will not support all his demands, he is well aware that you will be forced to support some of them in order to maintain your image of yourself as a liberal. He also knows, however, that your material comforts, your security, and your congenial relations with the Establishment are much more important to you than your rather volatile idealism, and that when the game gets rough you will be quick to see your own interests menaced by his demands. And you will sell him down the river for the five hundredth time in order to protect yourself. For this reason, as well as to support your own self-esteem, you are very anxious to have a position of leadership and control in the Negro's fight for rights, in order to be able to apply the brakes when you feel it necessary. This is why the Negro emphatically rejects you now. He does not want you in his way. You are more of a nuisance than anything else. And you, offended at this lack of appreciation, want to reassure the Negro — you are really on his side, and to prove it you will help him to get just a little more. You will be satisfied with the headlines. You will once again feel cozy with your liberal image — for a few days. Thus you make it possible for him, according to the fantasies of conservative thought, to "taste blood." And conservative thought is not always deluded in its choice of metaphors.

On the other hand, when you come face to face at last with *concrete* reality, and take note of some unexpected and unlovely aspects of what you have hitherto considered only in the abstract, you yourself are going to be a very frightened mortal. You are going to see that there are more than ideas and ideals involved in this struggle. It is more than a matter of images and headlines. And you are going to realize that what has begun is not going to be stopped, but that it will lead on into a future for which the past, perhaps, offers little or no precedent. But since it is one of the characteristics of liberals that they prefer their future to be vaguely predictable (just as the conservative prefers only a future that reproduces the past in all its details), when you see that the future is entirely out of your hands and that you are totally unprepared for it, you are

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going to fall back on the past, and you are going to end up in the arms of the conservatives. Indeed, you will be so much in their arms that you will be in their way, and will not improve the shooting.

THESE ARE FRANK AND BRUTAL FACTS, my good friend. But they are the facts on which you must base your future decisions. You must face it: this upheaval is going to sweep away not only the old style political machines, the quaint relics of a more sanguine era, but also a great deal of the managerial sophistication of our own time. And your liberalism is likely to go out the window along with a number of other entities that have their existence chiefly on paper and in the head.

What are you going to do? Are you going to say that though changes may be desirable in theory, they cannot possibly be paid for by a social upheaval amounting to revolution? Are you going to decide that the Negro movement is already out of hand, and therefore it must be stopped at any cost, even at the cost of ruthless force? In that case, you are retreating from the unknown future and falling back on a known and familiar alternative: namely the alternative in which you, who are after all on top, *remain on top by the use of force*, rather than admit a change in which you will not necessarily be on the bottom, but in which your position as top dog will no longer be guaranteed. You will prefer your own security to everything else, and you will be willing to sacrifice the Negro to preserve yourself.

But it is precisely in this that you are contributing to the inexorable development of a revolution, for revolutions are always the result of situations in which the drive of an underprivileged mass of men can no longer be contained by token concessions and in which the Establishment is too confused, too inert and too frightened to participate *with the underprivileged in a new and creative solution of what is realized to be their common problem.*

This is the case at present in the United States. Instead of seeing the Negro revolution as a manifestation of deep disorder that is eating away the inner substance of our society, *because it is in ourselves*, we look at it as a threat from outside ourselves—as a deplorable revolutionary adventure by an understandably dissatisfied minority, goaded on by Red agitators. But this is a totally fanciful view, which removes the crisis from the context of reality into a dream-world of our own in which we procede to seek a dream-solution. We forget that the Negro is there *because of us*. His crisis is the result of our acts, and is, in fact *our crisis*. Our total inability to see this is turning a common political problem into a violent conflict, in which there is no possibility of real dialogue, and in which the insensate shibboleths of racism drown out all hope of rational solutions. When this happens, even those Whites and Negroes who would normally be able to work together to find a common solution, will be driven apart, and the white man will become the black man's enemy by the mere fact that he is white.

As Martin Luther King sees so clearly, if the Negro struggle becomes a violent conflict (and this is what would best please the white racists!) it is bound to fail in its most rational and creative purpose—the real vindication of Negro rights and the definitive assertion of the Negro as a person equal in dignity to any other human person.

"I am convinced," he says, "that if we succumb to be the temptation to use violence in our struggle for freedom, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness; our chief legacy to them will be a never-ending reign of chaos." (From *Strength to Love* © by Harper Bros. 1963.)

In one word, there is a serious possibility of an eventual civil war which might wreck the fabric of American society. And although the Negro revolution in America is now unquestionably non-Marxist, and just as unquestionably a completely original and home-grown product of our own, there is no doubt that if it resulted in a revolutionary upheaval of American economic and political life, there might be a danger of Marxist elements "capturing" the revolution and taking it over in the name of Soviet Communism. Remote as it may seem, this fits an already familiar pattern, and furthermore it has to be con-

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sidered because it already dominates the minds of the segregationist right wing.

My question to you is this: can you think of a better way of conducting yourself?

Does all profoundly significant social change have to be carried out in violence and with murder, destruction, police repression and counter repression? Is it not possible that the whites might give closer attention to the claims of Negro leaders like Martin Luther King, who assert that they do not want violence, and who give every assurance (backed up by some rather convincing evidence, if you can remember Birmingham) that the Negro is not out to kill anybody, that he is really fighting not only for his own freedom, but also, in some strange way, for the freedom of the whites? (This is a new and quixotic concept to us, since we are fully convinced that we are the freest people that ever existed.) Is it true that all change of our present social framework is necessarily a disaster so great that any price can legitimately be paid to keep it from coming about? Is it not possible that whites and Negroes might join together in a creative political experiment such as the world has never yet seen, and in which the first condition would be that the whites consented to let the Negroes run their own revolution non-violently, giving them the necessary support and cooperation, and not being alarmed at some of the sacrifices and difficulties that would necessarily be involved?

Is there no alternative but violent repression, in which, reluctantly no doubt, you decide that it is better for the Establishment to be maintained by the exercise of the power which is entirely in white hands, and which ought to remain in white hands because they are white (because, of course, Negroes are "not yet ready" for any kind of power)? This presupposes a simple view of the situation: a belief that when the chips are down it is going to be either whites or blacks, and since whites have proved their capacity to "run the country" and "keep order," it is unthinkable even to permit the possibility of that disorder which, you take it for granted, would follow if Negroes took a leading part in our political life.

Conclusion: revolution must be prevented at all costs; but demonstrations are already revolutionary; *ergo*, fire on the demonstrators; *ergo* . . . At the end of this chain of thought I visualize you, my liberal friend, goose stepping down Massachusetts Avenue in the uniform of an American Totalitarian Party in a mass rally where nothing but the most uproarious approval is manifest, except, by implication, on the part of silent and strangely scented clouds of smoke drifting over from the new "camps" where the "Negroes are living in retirement."

III

How is Christianity involved in the Negro struggle? Dr. Martin Luther King has appealed to strictly Christian motives. He has based his non-violence on his belief that love can unite men, even enemies, in truth. That is to say that he has clearly spelled out the struggle for freedom not as a struggle for the Negro alone, but also for the white man. From the start, the non-violent element in the Negro struggle is oriented toward "healing" the sin of racism and toward unity in reconciliation. An absolutely necessary element in this reconciliation is that the white man should allow himself to learn the mute lesson which is addressed to him in the suffering, the non-violent protest, the loving acceptance of punishment for the violation of unjust laws, which the Negro freely and willingly brings down upon himself in the white man's presence, in the hope that the oppressor may come to see his own injustice.

The purpose of this suffering, freely sought and accepted in the spirit of Christ, is the liberation of the Negro and the redemption of the white man, blinded by his endemic sin of racial injustice. In other words, the struggle for liberty is not regarded by this most significant sector of the Negro population merely as a fight for political rights. It is this, and it is also much more. It is what Ghandi called *Satyagraha*—a struggle first of all for the *truth*, outside and independent of specific political contingencies.

The mystique of Negro non-violence holds that the victory of truth is inevitable but that the redemption of individuals is not inevitable. Though the truth will win, since in Christ it has already conquered, not everyone can "come to

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the light"—for if his works are darkness, he fears to let them be seen.

The Negro children who walked calmly up to the police dogs that lunged at them with a fury capable of tearing their small bodies to pieces, were not only confronting the truth in an exalted moment of faith, a providential *kairos*. They were also in their simplicity bearing heroic Christian witness to the truth, for they were exposing their bodies to death in order to show God and man that they believed in the just rights of their people, knew that those rights had been unjustly, shamefully and systematically violated, and realized that the violation called for expiation and redemptive protest, because it was an offense against God and His truth.

They were stating clearly that the time had come where such violations could no longer be tolerated. These Negro followers of Dr. King are convinced that there is more at stake than civic rights. They believe that the survival of America is itself in question. They believe that the sin of white America has reached such a proportion that it may call down a dreadful judgment, perhaps total destruction, on the whole country, unless atonement is made.

These Negroes are not simply judging the white man and rejecting him. On the contrary, they are seeking by Christian love and sacrifice to redeem him, to enlighten him, so as not only to save his soul from perdition, but also to awaken his mind and his conscience, and stir him to initiate the reform and renewal which may still be capable of saving our society. But this renewal must be the work of both the White and the Negro together. It cannot be planned and carried out by the white man alone or even by the Negro under the white man's paternal guidance. It demands some Negro initiative, and the white man cannot collaborate fruitfully until he recognizes the necessity of this initiative. The Negro is not going to be placated with assurances of respect and vague encouragement from our side. He is going to make sure that we are listening and that we have understood him, before he will believe in our attempts to help.

The purpose of non-violent protest, in its deepest and most spiritual dimensions, is then to awaken the conscience of the white man to the awful reality of his injustice and of his sin, so that he will be able to see that the Negro problem is really a *White* problem: that the cancer of injustice and hate, which is eating white society and is only partly manifested in racial segregation with all its consequences, *is rooted in the heart of the white man himself*.

Only if the white man sees this will he be able gradually to understand the real nature of the problem and take steps to save himself and his society from complete ruin. As the Negro sees it, the Cold War and its fatal insanities are to a great extent generated within the purblind, guilt ridden, self-deceiving, self-tormenting and self-destructive psyche of the white man.

It is curious that while some southern whites are surrounding their houses with floodlights, to protect themselves in case Negroes creep up to murder them in the dark, all the violence in the South to date has been on the part of the whites themselves. Barbara Deming, a white New England woman who demonstrated with the Negro children in Birmingham, was sent to jail with them. The jail was of course segregated. She was thrown in a cell full of white prostitutes and other delinquents, and found them not only furious and hostile towards her, but terrified lest the Negro children (who were still singing hymns after a sublime display of Christian heroism) might rape and murder them in the jail. Curious that these white southerners (people to be pitied indeed), from their half-world of violence, petty thievery, vice and addiction, were the ones who felt themselves menaced, and menaced by the clear eyes of children! The truth is that they had very good reason to fear. The action of the children was aimed at them, and aimed directly at them. It was an attack not upon their property, their jobs, their social status, but upon their inmost conscience. And unless that attack could be met and deflected, *these people would not be able to continue as they were*.

In all literal truth, if they "heard" the message of the Negro children, they would cease to be the people they were. They would have to "die" to everything which was familiar and secure. They would have to die to their past, to their

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society with its prejudices and its inertia, die to its false beliefs, and *go over to the side of the Negroes.* For a Southern white, this would be a real "death" indeed!

This is the radical challenge of Negro non-violence today. This is why it is a source of uneasiness and fear to all white men who are attached to their security. If they are forced to listen to what the Negro is trying to say, the whites may have to admit that *their prosperity is rooted to some extent in injustice and in sin.* And, in consequence, this might lead to a complete re-examination of the political motives behind all our current policies, domestic and foreign, with the possible admission that we are wrong. Such an admission might, in fact, be so disastrous that its effects would dislocate our whole economy and ruin the country. These are not things that are consciously admitted, but they are confusedly present in our thoughts and fears. They account for the passionate and mindless desperation with which we plunge this way and that, trying to evade the implications of our present crisis.

Unfortunately, not all Negroes can appreciate the Christian foundation of non-violent action as it is practised by the followers of Dr. King. Many northern Negro leaders, and especially the organizers of the Black Muslim movement, categorically reject Dr. King's ideas as sentimental. They believe that his non-violence is a masochistic exhibition of defeatism which flatters the whites, plays into their hands, and degrades the Negro still further by forcing him to submit uselessly to violence and humiliation. In some cases, the sharp criticism of Martin Luther King is carried so far as to accuse him of deliberately and cynically sacrificing his followers in order to get power and prestige for himself in white society.

This reaction against what is basically a Christian protest leads to another extreme: a black racism as intransigeant and as fanatical as that of the white racists themselves. It is true that the Black Muslims must not be painted as a corporation of devils. Yet, the Muslim movement is one of absolutely hostile rejection of all that is white, including Christianity, conceived as the "white man's religion." Instead, Islam, regarded as "African religion" and as the worship of a "Black God" or at least of the Black Man's God, is substituted for it. Emphasis is laid on the martial and combative elements in the faith of Islam, and the first principle of all race relations is that the white man is never to be trusted. He is worthy only of hatred and contempt. No "dialogue" is possible between white and black, and all that can be achieved is a complete separation. Their aim is to achieve this separation without violence, in so far as this may be possible: but they will not hesitate to use violence if this becomes necessary. Theoretically, then, the Black Muslims do not have a systematic program of violent attack on the white population, as some seem to imagine. But since the separation of which they dream is, and can be, no more than a dream, the tension between the races in the big cities of the north where the Muslims are concentrated, will undoubtedly produce some violence sooner or later. It can be said, however, that the fact that the Muslims are disciplined and organized makes them to some extent an asset: they will certainly try to control violence and direct it. This is preferable to completely uncontrolled and in some ways "uncaused" rioting, exploding at the slightest spark and spreading in aimless fury through whole cities until its force is spent. Yet the Muslims, however disciplined they themselves may be, can easily start a general conflagration.

The Black Muslims have so far had no influence in the south, and although the Negro spokesmen in the North are often hostile to Martin Luther King, he has immense prestige wherever Negroes are to be found in the United States, though Birmingham was not understood by all of them as a "victory" for their race. It seems, however, that all hope of really constructive and positive results from the Civil Rights Movement is to be placed in the Christian elements. It is also possible that as the movement gains in power, the reasonableness and the Christian fervor of these elements will recede into the background and the Movement will become more and more an unreasoning and intransigeant mass movement dedicated to the conquest of sheer power, more and more inclined to violence.

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If the Christian and non-violent element in Negro protest is finally discredited it may mean that Christianity itself will become meaningless in Negro eyes. Those Negroes who attack their Christian leaders in the South are usually completely disillusioned with Christianity, if not bitterly hostile to it, because they are convinced that it has no other function than to keep the Negro in passive and helpless submission to his white oppressors. When white Christians express admiration and sympathy for Dr. King, this is immediately interpreted by his Negro critics as evidence for their own negative thesis.

As for the attitude of white Christians toward the Negro freedom movement, Protestants and Catholics alike are at best confused and evasive in their sympathies. One gets the impression that they mean well, and that they recognize the validity of the Negro's protest, but that they are so out of contact with the realities of the time that they have no idea how they can effectively help him. It is true that the American Hierarchy has denounced the sin of racism. Some, but not all, Catholic Bishops have taken action to integrate Catholic schools or to castigate the worst abuses of discrimination. Here and there Christian leaders get together to make encouraging statements. Yet at the same time, even those white Christians most favorable to the Negro cause have been quick to react against the protests in Birmingham and Jackson, censuring them and demanding "more patience" on the Negro's part, sincerely believing that the whole problem can be adequately settled only by the administration in Washington. This, to the Negro, is more than naïve. He cannot help but interpret it as evasion and bad faith, and consequently he has little or no confidence in *any* white Christian group including the Catholic Church.

Evidently, many white Christians will be grieved and disappointed at this evaluation of their sincere concern over the Negro's struggle for his rights. They will remind the Negro that they *have* taken certain steps in his favor. They will expect him to be more grateful. I think the time has come to say two things about this attitude.

First of all, it shows that they do not grasp the real dimensions of the problem as the Negro sees it. Like the average liberal, they think that the Negro is simply presenting a few reasonable demands which can be met by legislative action. And, as a corollary to this, they assume that if the Negro were to ask any more than this, he would be unreasonable if not rebellious.

In actual fact the Negro is not simply asking to be "accepted into" the white man's society, and eventually "absorbed by it," so that race relations in the U.S. may finally come to be something like those in Latin America. I think that most Catholics tend, half consciously, to imagine that this would be a reasonable outcome: let the United States imitate those countries that were settled by Catholics in the first place, and where there has never been a very strict color line. Catholic values will triumph and there will be no more racial problems, because the United States will be like Brazil.

As present events in Brazil make quite clear, this is no solution.

The actions and attitudes of white Christians all, without exception, contain a basic and axiomatic assumption of white superiority, even when the pleas of the Negro for equal rights are hailed with the greatest good will. It is simply taken for granted that, since the white man is superior, the *Negro wants to become a white man*. And we, liberals and Christians that we are, advance generously, with open arms, to embrace our little black brother and welcome him into white society.

The Negro is not only not grateful, he is not even impressed. In fact, he shows by his attitude that he is at the same time antagonized and disgusted by our stupidity. And here, I think, is where all Christians (including Catholics) are, innocently no doubt, doing the gravest harm to Christian truth.

For some unknown reason, the white man (especially the southern white) does not seem to realize that he has been rather closely observed, for the last two centuries, by his Negro slaves, servants, share-croppers, mistresses, and bastards. He does not seem to be aware of the fact that they know a great deal about him, and, in fact, understand him in some ways better than he under-

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stands himself. This information has never been passed on to the white man, who has never dreamed of asking for it. He has assumed that the ideas of the Negro were more or less worthless in the first place. Do Negroes think? Of course not: they just sing, dance, make love, and lie in the shade doing nothing, because they are *different*. They haven't got the energy to think!

The Negro knows precisely why the white man imagines that the Negro wants to be a White Man. The White Man is too insecure in his fatuous self-complacency to be able to imagine anything else.

Consequently, when the Catholic Church gives the impression that it regards the South as a vast potential pool of "Negro converts," in which a zealous and ardent white apostolate can transform a few million Uncle Toms into reasonably respectable imitations of white Catholics, this actually does very little to make the Negro respect the truth of Christ, practically nothing to help him understand the mystery of Christ in His Church.

It is often quite evident that the genuinely warm sympathy which so many Catholics have for the Negro is nevertheless something the Negro himself now accepts only with resignation and disillusionment. What we love in the Negro tends to be, once again, the same old image of the vaudeville darkie, the quaint Black Mammy of plantation days, the Pullman porter with ready wit, the devoted retainer whose whole family has served a white southern feudal tribe for generations. This is a caricature of the Negro of which the Negro himself has long since grown tired, and its chief function is to flatter the white man's sense of superiority. One has yet to find very many Catholics, including especially priests, who are really able to deal with Negroes on an equal footing, that is to say without the specious and fradulent mediation of this image. Most of us are congenitally unable to think black, and yet that is precisely what we must do before we can even hope to understand the crisis in which we find ourselves, and our best considered and most sympathetic consideration of the Negro's plight is one calculated to antagonize him because it reflects such pitiful inability to *see* him, right before our nose, as a real human being and not a higher type of domestic animal. Furthermore we do not bother really to listen to what he says, because we assume that when the dialogue really begins, he will already be thinking just like ourselves. And in the meantime we are not too disposed to offend the white racists, either. We still want to please everybody with soft words and pleasant generalizations, which we convince ourselves are necessary for charity.

A genuinely Catholic approach to the Negro would assume not only that white and the Negro are essentially equal in dignity (and this, I think, we do generally assume) but also that they are brothers in the fullest sense of the word. This means to say that a genuinely Catholic attitude in manners of race is one which concretely accepts and fully recognizes the fact that different races and cultures are *correlative*. *They mutually complete one another*. The white man needs the Negro—and needs to know that he needs him.

White calls for black just as black calls for white. Our significance as white men is to be seen *entirely* in the fact that all men are not white. Until this fact is grasped, we will never realize our true place in the world, and we will never achieve what we are meant to achieve in it. The white man is *for* the black man: that is why he is white. The black man is for the white man: that is why he is black. But so far, we have managed only to see these relationships in a very unsatisfactory and distorted fashion.

First of all, there was the crude initial concept: the black man was *for* the white man, in the sense that he belonged to him as his slave. But in the relationship of master and slave there is no correlative responsibility. The master is like God, who cannot enter into a relationship with a creature: the creature can only enter into a relationship with Him. So the Master could do what he liked with the slave, and perhaps, incidentally, he might find himself, without realizing it, living to some extent *for* the slave whom he had come to trust and love. But though there was a germinating humanity in this "relationship," there was no sense of a real social obligation to slaves as such, who therefore were never really admitted to be human beings. Thus though the South of

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slavery days was a kind of Eden for the white man (and is still remembered in the southern myth as Eden) it was without human significance because it was empty of basic truth: the truth of *Man* was absent, because here were two different kinds of men who were supposed, in the order of nature, to complete one another as correlatives, and one of them was not admitted to human status.

The Civil War came, and the Negro acquired a human status on the books of law: but only on the books. In actual fact his position was even less human than before.

To assume the superiority of the white race and of European-American culture as axiomatic, and to procede from there to "integrate" all other races and cultures by a purely one-sided operation is a pure travesty of Catholic unity in truth. In fact, this fake Catholicism, this parody of unity which is no unity at all but a one-sided and arbitrary attempt to reduce others to a condition of identity with ourselves, is one of the most disastrous of misconceptions.

It may be true that a French missionary who brings the truth of the Gospel to a West African pagan is bringing him the truth indeed. But unfortunately, the fatal tendency has too often been to assume that *everything* he was bringing, down to his clothes, his table manners, his Cartesian habits of thought, his Gallic self-esteem and, in a word, the infallibility of the *bien pensant* were all pure revelations of God and His Church. In such conditions, missionaries have assumed, with extreme generosity, that their only function was to *give* of their sublime fulness, and that it was never necessary for them to receive, to learn, to accept any kind of a spiritual gift from the native and from his indigenous culture. Material contributions—yes. But nothing else. There has generally been no conception at all that the white man had anything to learn from the Negro. And now, the irony is that the Negro (especially the Christian Negro of the heroic stamp of Dr. King) *is offering the white man a "message of salvation," and the white man is so blinded by his self-sufficiency and self-conceit that he does not recognize the peril in which he puts himself by ignoring the offer.*

But is the white man in a position to recognize the providential character of this hour? If I say that the Negro offers him an "opportunity," the white man will perhaps scrutinize him afresh in order to find out what he has to sell. And what will he see? Something at once disturbing and unattractive. Processions of discontented black men and women carrying signs. Groups of exalted children singing hymns. Frightened but determined people letting themselves be rolled around the street by the power of firehoses. There is courage there, no doubt, and they obviously mean business. But we have courage too, and there is no need at all for us to have the hoses turned on us.

But this is not the point. The Negro, in fact, has nothing to sell. He is only offering us the occasion *to enter with him into a providential reciprocity* willed for us by God. He is inviting us to understand him as necessary to our own lives, and as completing them. He is warning us that we cannot do without him, and that if we insist on regarding him as an enemy, an object of contempt, or a rival, we will perhaps sterilize and ruin our own lives. He is telling us that unless we can enter into a vital and Christian relationship with him, there will be hate, violence, and civil war indeed: and from this violence perhaps none of us will emerge whole.

It must then be said that this most critical moment in American history is the providential "hour," the *kairos* not merely of the Negro, but of the white man. It is, or at any rate it can be, God's hour. It can be the hour of vocation, the moment in which, hearing and understanding the will of God as expressed in the urgent need of our Negro brother, we can respond to that inscrutable will in a faith that faces the need of reform and creative change, in order that the demands of truth and justice may not go unfulfilled.

It is for this reason that the "prudence" and the (self-styled) wisdom of some white Christian leaders may well prove to be a sign of spiritual blindness, and as such it may be decisive in leading the Negro away from Christian truth and natural reason, to embark on a violent and

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chaotic fight for power characterized only by brutality and pragmatism. In this struggle the lessons given by the white police and politicians in the South will certainly be turned to good advantage.

What the Negro now seeks and expects (or perhaps what he has entirely given up expecting) from the white Christian is not sermons on patience, but a creative and enlightened understanding of his effort to meet the demands of God in this, his *kairos*. What he expects of us is some indication that we are capable of seeing a little of the vision he has seen, and of sharing his risks and his courage. What he asks us is not the same old string of meaningless platitudes that we have always offered him in lieu of advice. He asks us to listen to him, and to pay some attention to what *he* has to say. He seriously demands that we learn something from him, because he is convinced that we need this, and need it badly.

Negro writers like James Baldwin have repeatedly demonstrated that this conviction lends an extraordinary power to their words. There is no question that they have more to say than anybody else writing in America today. Many have read their books and heard their message, but few are prepared to understand it because they simply cannot conceive of a white man learning anything worth while from a Negro. Still less can they imagine that the Negro might quite possibly have a prophetic message from God to the society of our time.

In simple and Christian terms, I would say that the message is this: white society has sinned in many ways. It has betrayed Christ by its injustices to races it considered "inferior" and to countries which it colonized. In particular it has sinned against Christ in its lamentable injustices and cruelties to the Negro. The time has come when both white and Negro have been granted, by God, a unique and momentous opportunity.

We have this opportunity because the Negro has taken the steps which made it possible. He has refused to accept the iniquity and injustice of white discrimination. He has seen that to acquiesce in this injustice is not virtue, but only collaboration in evil. He has declared that he rejects both the physical evil of segregation and the moral evil of passive acquiescence in the white man's sin. But this is only the beginning. Now the white man must do his share, or the Negro's efforts will have no fruit.

The sin of the white man is to be expiated, through a *genuine response to the redemptive love of the Negro for him*. The Negro is ready to suffer, if necessary to die, if this will make the white man understand his sin, repent of it, and atone for it. But this atonement must consist of two things:

1) A complete reform of the social system which permits and breeds such injustices.

2) This work of reorganization must be carried out under the inspiration of the Negro whose providential time has now arrived, and who has received from God enough light, ardor and spiritual strength to free the white man in freeing himself from the white man.

I state these two conditions as nakedly and unequivocally as I find them in the words of Negro leaders. My only comment is that in making these demands, they are committing themselves very heavily to provide answers, in case we should ever ask them any questions. The Negro is saying that in effect *he has answers*. So far, his actions at Birmingham make his claim credible. I, for one, am willing to hear more. But I must admit there is as yet a certain vagueness in the inconclusive remarks so far advanced concerning the future. I am not too sure the Negro knows, any better than anyone else, where this country is actually going.

Yet this is a challenge and a very bold one. The Negro leaders are making some fantastic claims. And they are perhaps all the more fantastic because those who make them have half despaired of ever being heard. Certainly, all the official good will of the Administration is in no sense an acknowledgement that these claims have even been considered in their depth. That is because Washington is professionally capable only of seeing this as a political issue. Actually, it is a spiritual and religious one, and this element is by far the most important. But it is the element that no one is ready to see. A white detective in Birmingham, watching scores of Negro children file into the paddy wagons, gave expression to the

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mind of the nation when he said: "If this is religion, I don't want any part of it." If this is really what the mind of white America has concluded, then we stand judged by our own thought. What is demanded of us is not necessarily that we believe that the Negro has mysterious and magic answers in the realm of politics and social control, *but that his spiritual insight into our common crisis is something we must take seriously*. By and large, in the midst of the clamor of every possible kind of jaded and laughable false prophet, the voice of the American Negro has in it a genuine prophetic ring. Who knows if we will ever get another chance to hear it?

In any case the Negro demands that his conditions be met with full attention and seriousness. The white man may not fully succeed in this—but he must at least try with all the earnestness at his command. Otherwise, the moment of grace will pass without effect. The merciful *kairos* of truth will turn into the dark hour of destruction and of hate. The awakened Negro will forget his moment of Christian hope and Christian inspiration. He will deliberately drive out of his heart the merciful love of Christ. He will no longer be the gentle, wide-eyed child singing hymns while police dogs lunge at his throat. There will be no more hymns and no more prayer vigils. He will become a Samson whose African strength flows ominously back into his arms. He will suddenly pull the pillars of white society crashing down upon himself and his oppressor. And perhaps, somewhere, out of the ruins, a new world (a black world) will one day arise.

This is the "message" which the Negro is trying to give white America. I have spelled it out for myself, subject to correction, in order to see whether a white man is even capable of grasping the words, let alone believing them. For the rest, you have Moses and the Prophets: Martin Luther King, James Baldwin and the others. Read them, and see for yourself what they are saying.

IT IS RELATED *that when Mohammed was seeking the light, he thought of becoming a Christian, and he went to some Nestorian Christians in a corner of Arabia and sought a sign of the truth of Christianity from them. In order to see whether they had faith, he asked them to show him the credibility of the Christian message by walking barefoot on red hot coals. The Nestorians told him that he was mad. Mohammed, saying nothing, departed from them. And soon the conviction that he sought came to him in the burning heat of the Arabian desert. It was a truth of stark and dreadful simplicity—to be proved by the sword.*

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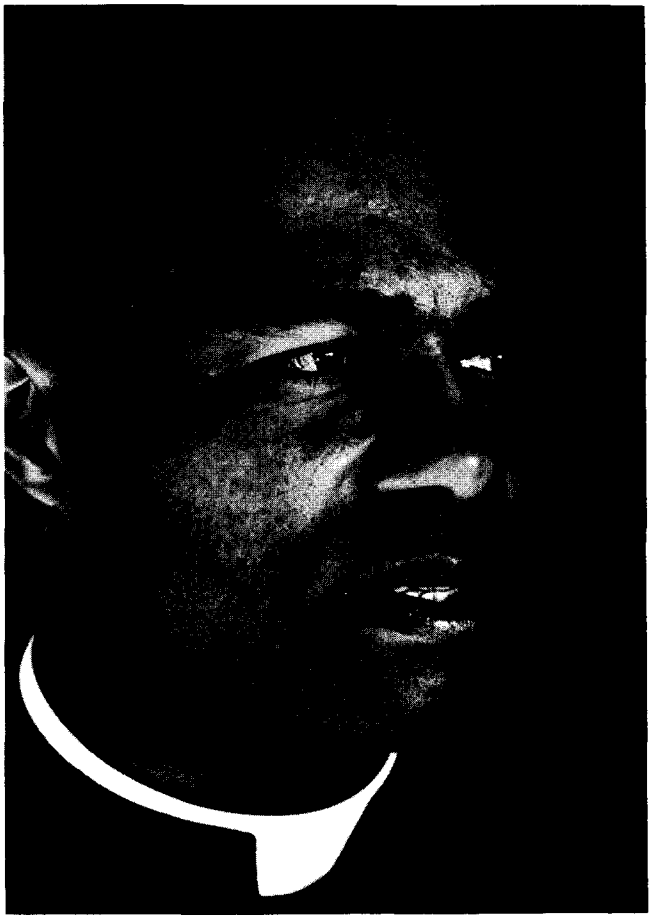
DIALOGUE:

Father August THOMPSON



FATHER AUGUST THOMPSON *is a priest in Ferriday, Louisiana.*

FATHER THOMPSON, *since you are a priest who happens also to be a Negro, we might begin talking of the effects of racism on religion in the U.S. The Church has, of course, been strongly outspoken on this subject.*

Yes, I have in my hand *Pacem in Terris*, which means so much to me because here is the Pope speaking, and we can't evade the fact that once the Holy Father speaks, we must listen. Pope John XXIII's death was a grievous loss to us, but I am happy to see that Pope Paul VI is moving ahead in the same spirit.

There is one part here in *Pacem in Terris* where His Holiness speaks specifically about racism. "But truth requires the elimination of every trace of racism," Pope John says in paragraph 86. Racism is our major problem in the world today. If we face this truth, we must get rid of racism. I'd like to concentrate on this—to air some of these truths even where they hurt, even where they are likely to cause strong disagreement.

We needn't beat around the bush, Father. We are going to discuss one of the greatest incongruities in our times—the racism that exists quite openly in some areas of the south and other areas of the country as practiced by Catholics. Didn't your own sister have to leave the South in order to become a registered nurse?

Yes, my sister Margarette. She had to leave the South for her studies because no Catholic hospital in the South would take her for training. This was about 1951, I believe, but even today in the so-called Deep South I do not think that any Negro girl could get into a Catholic Hospital for her nurse's training. This story can be found in the September 1955 issue of *Jubilee* Magazine. Now, with Archbishop Hallinan's courageous stand, it might be possible in Atlanta.

Father, to clear the air, let's talk about racists' claims that Negroes are morally inferior by nature; that there are more Negro crimes, a looser sexual morality . . .

I'd like to make two points here. Much of this kind of talk comes from the need to justify injustices. Only by believing that Negroes are intrinsically inferior can non-Negroes tolerate in conscience the system that defrauds us of our civil and human rights. We hear talk about "Ne-

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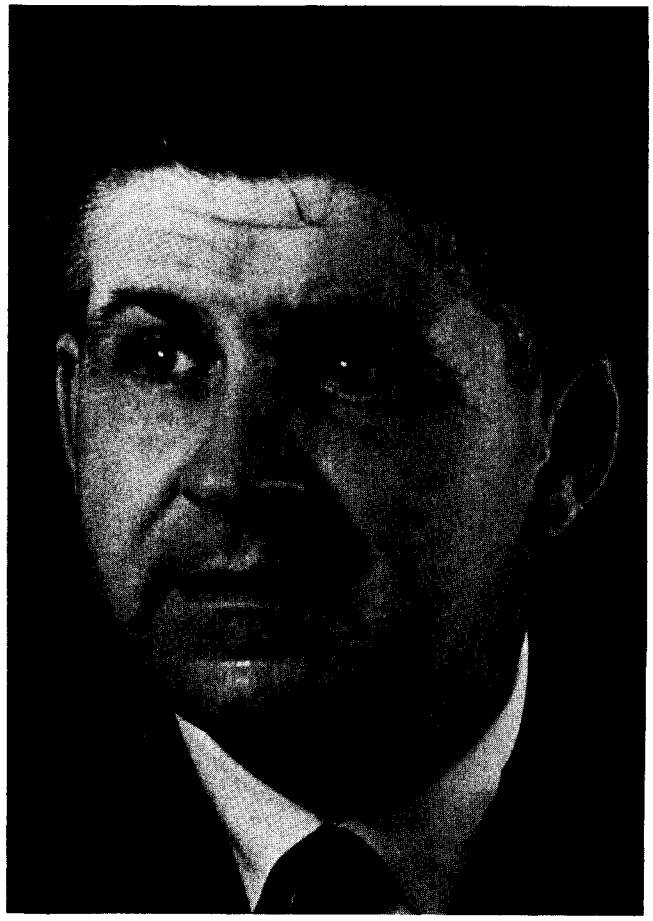
gro crime," but do Negroes commit any crimes that men of other complexions do not commit? No, these are not Negro crimes, but the crimes of men. If statistically Negroes commit more crimes in America that non-Negroes, the cause lies not in our "Negro-ness" but in the very ghetto life that we are forced to lead under a system of rigid segregation, in the formation we receive. This system, with all its injustices, deprives men of any sense of dignity or personal value—and no man can live without that. If you kept a significant number of white men in such a degrading environment, systematically deprived them of dignity and hope, closed most doors to self-fulfilment and left open only the door to despair, the white crime rate would soar. Also, since Negroes see that law-enforcement generally means abuse for us, we grow up with less respect for the law than we should have. In the South, where so many of the police belong to the Klans or other racist groups, no example is set that might give Negroes any true respect for the law.

Here again, I woud like to refer to the Holy Father's *Pacem in Terris*. He says: "It is not true that some human beings are by nature superior and others inferior. All men are equal in their natural dignity."

Another thing—statistics can be most misleading. Every time a Negro youth snatches a purse, this goes on the books—as it should. But a white group of racists can burn down a Negro's home because he attempts to register to vote—they can bomb, beat, intimidate and otherwise disabuse Negroes of rights which we guarantee to every citizen, but these criminal acts, committed under the cloak of anonymity, do not get into the statistics.

The second point I would like to make is that "morality" has come to mean only one thing in our society—sex. Yet morality has to do with the right and wrong in human behavior. The deliberate distortion of statistics, as used by racist propagandists, to prove that we are morally "inferior" is in itself immoral: "Thou shalt not bear false witness . . ." Negroes see clearly the contradiction involved where men know all the nuances of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments,

John Howard GRIFFIN



JOHN HOWARD GRIFFIN *is the author of* The Devil Rides Outside *and* Black Like Me.

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but are seemingly unaware of the others, particularly the Eighth. We know that we, as American citizens, are *born* with certain inalienable rights and that to be denied those rights without just cause constitutes a gigantic fraud. This kind of crime does not get into the statistics either.

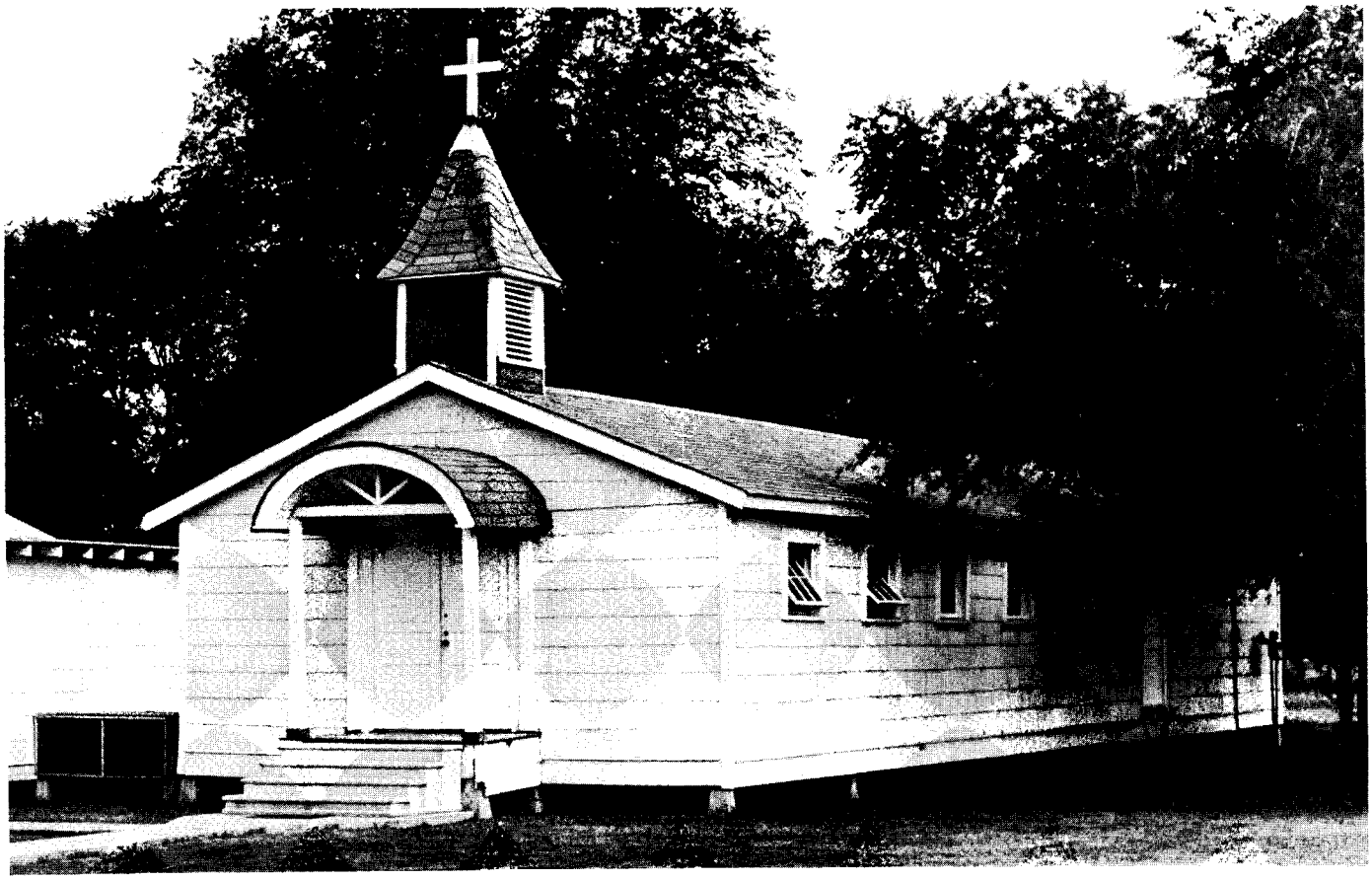
And yet, Father, we hear constantly the cant that Negroes must change, *must earn the rights we unhesitatingly accord even the most degraded non-Negro. We hear it also among Catholics, don't we?*

Yes, and here the truth is going to be painful. I realize that white Catholic southerners are the products of their environment—the prisoners of their southern segregated culture just as we Negroes are. From their point of view, changes in their attitudes are difficult—and in fact they are not even aware that such changes might be indicated. I sympathize deeply with the agony that comes when the need for such changes of attitude is perceived—and more and more are perceiving it.

But let me speak from the Negro's point of view. We have our own dilemmas. They expect us to "change" and yet they give little help to bring about change. This is particularly true and troublesome in the area of religion. In some southern dioceses for example Negroes cannot attend retreats or days of recollection. I have had parishioners come up and ask me what a retreat is. They have only heard about them. But we cannot attend retreats—

Except as a group?

Not even as a group. They just don't want us. In some places our young people cannot attend camps. Too often we cannot join church societies. Yes, it is true that we could form our own little segregated Negro versions of these same societies, but you lose the whole spirit—the very Catholicity—of it when you do that. In such areas, Negro couples cannot attend Cana Conferences. Do you know that I, as a priest, have never attended a Cana Conference? Do you know that white non-Catholics are welcomed



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into Catholic churches and can attend church functions where I, as a Negro priest, would not be permitted?

But look at the problem. Here we constantly call on Negroes to be patient, humble, virtuous —and this is right, of course. But Negroes are expected to learn these things with the one little sermon we hear on Sundays. And if the priest who serves us is not fervent—or if he unknowingly treats us in a way to deprive us of our dignity, paternalistically, calling us "boy" or "girl" —then we have little opportunity of developing into anything but poor Catholics indeed.

Didn't St. Thomas Aquinas say that no man can live without love, and that if he is denied the love of the things of the spirit he will surely fall into the love of the things of the world? Here is the crux of the problem. I think it is almost impossible for non-Negroes, even in the Deep South where they think they know all about us, to realize how many doors that lead one to a love of the things of the spirit—education and religion particularly—are effectively closed to Negroes. Or how deeply we are scandalized to see Catholics helping to hold those doors closed to us by cooperating with the kind of segregation that Holy Mother Church has declared abominable.

Negro writers in particular have spoken out with a kind of slashing bitterness that often shocks the white community. Do these writers mirror resentments felt by most members of the Negro community? What they say certainly disagrees with the often-heard contention of Southern Whites that Negroes were a happy, contented people until outside agitators and the U.S. Supreme Court began stirring them up.

Yes, one doesn't know whether to laugh or cry when our discontent is blamed on outside instigators and the 1954 Supreme Court Decision. How false. How false to think that our discontent is anything other than the discontent of men who are not allowed to be whole.

Professor Dwight L. Dumond, in his recent great work which is now the definitive study in its field, "Antislavery" *explodes many of these southern myths and demonstrates how old this discontent is, what desperate attempts Negroes made to escape, how many mothers committed suicide.*

Yes, our discontent is as old as our history in this country. But for a long time we had to hide it. If we did not smile and act happy, we were considered arrogant, soreheads and we were taught a lesson. Do you remember Paul Laurence Dunbar's outcry, written around the turn of the century:

We wear the mask that grins and lies . . .
We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To Thee from tortured souls arise . . .

That was written fifty years ago. We had to accommodate, as we used to call it—but what the whites never realized is what went on in our homes at night. I can remember back some thirty years myself, to what I heard when I was a little boy. Of course, we went out and worked every day. We worked in the fields, we worked in the houses. But when we went home, the times we wept, the resentments we spilled out to one another—well, if the whites had heard them, none of us would have had a livelihood the next day. This has gone on a long, long time. These resentments have grown and have finally reached a stage where we simply cannot hide our discontent any longer. This is especially true since World War II, in which Negroes fought to protect and defend rights and liberties which they have not found when they returned home.

What about claims frequently made by whites that Negroes, never having known anything else in the South, become inured to all of these undignifying things—that they do not really suffer from the lack of rights they have never known?

How can any man ever become accustomed to getting cheated? When the body is never fully fed, it never stops being hungry. It is the same with man's spirit—it hungers, hungers after dignity, freedom and love; and it never stops hungering after these things until it is finally crushed. We Negroes have often referred to our treatment as being like a bone thrown to a dog. You don't ask the dog if it wants this bone, or if it wants another or if it wants a piece of meat. You just throw the bone and tell the dog it must take that. And that's what happens too often to our citizens of color. Negroes are thrown a bone and

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told: "This is what you want. This is how you want it." The Negro just cannot understand why it is that some persons never think we can grow up enough to know exactly what we want and always have to have others tell us what we want and how we want it. In the past, Negroes who said: "I want more than a bone. I need something more than that for myself and my children," were called "bad niggers" and silenced.

This one point should be emphasized. The Negro has never become accustomed and he will never become accustomed to being treated as less than fully a human being. The American Negro will never become accustomed to being treated as less than fully an American. The Catholic Negro will never become accustomed to being treated as less than fully a Catholic.

What about the role of religion in solving this problem of racism? In your youth and even now, how have religious leaders solved this problem? I do not mean Catholics exclusively, but all religious leaders.

In my youth, it simply wasn't solved. It wasn't solved because everyone was silent. Everyone was afraid.

Afraid of what, Father?

Afraid of the truth. Afraid to face facts. Negroes and some percipient whites have for a long time tried to make these truths known—but they are too painful for most to face. And finally, you get tired of trying to bring forth the truth when no one listens. You are talking to the wall. You are talking to the wind.

Father, this truth about which we speak—this truth as you know it and as I have known it as a Negro Catholic—in many of its aspects, this truth is deeply scandalizing. Many of us have held back telling these things out of our love of the Church. Do you think we were right?

We are never right in suppressing any truth that could help to bring about right.

Let's pursue this. We very often hold back for fear of offering scandal, particularly to non-Catholics; for fear that anti-Catholics might build their case against Catholicism even stronger through over-emphasis on this scandal of truth. And yet I wonder if by doing this—and you can answer this better than I—we have not deepened and in effect perpetrated the scandal. Have we hidden our problems rather than solved them?

This has been a source of the deepest trouble with me. Many believe that we should keep our skeletons in the closet; but I am convinced that we simply cannot afford to have any skeletons—especially skeletons that disillusion souls and drive them from God.

Imagine what happens to a new Negro convert who has been taught only what the Church is, what the Church stands for, and who then encounters the kind of segregation-within-the-Faith one finds in many areas of the South. I know that I, in my convert classes, have been guilty of hiding many of these things, not telling the converts what they are likely to find: that in some "non-segregated" but still segregated churches they must sit to one side; that in some Catholic churches they will not even be permitted to worship. And then I have seen them suffer the terrible shock of discovery. In taking account of our silence here, we must not forget these souls that have been sickened and alienated—souls of Negroes, yes, but precious in God's sight. The fault—the ramifications of segregation within some southern churches—becomes monstrous when seen in this light. How can any Christian soul ever be justified in acting in any way to deprive any other Christian soul of full and unhampered participation in Christian life and worship?

Do you, as a priest, feel any direct effects of prejudice within the Church?

Yes, some Catholics will not even call me Father—they dodge around such an endearing term by calling me Reverend or Padre or something like that. Of course, there are many churches and functions which I do not attend. We'll talk about that later.

In other areas of activity, prejudice complicates the priestly life at the personal level. I am rarely invited, for example, to do anything with other priests—to go fishing, for example, or make a trip. But this is simply the way things are, and does not indicate prejudice on their part necessarily. In general, priests enjoy such recreation and indeed many non-recreational pastimes with

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one another. I am not directly excluded from such activities, I am just never *included* in them. Of course there are really very few places where a Negro and a Caucasian priest can go together in the South. Everything is segregated. In the early days of my priesthood, this isolation was very difficult for me. It is hard to be young and to be alone and to try to live the priestly life without the companionship of fellow priests. The Grace of God makes it possible, of course.

Father, when I lived for a time as a Negro in the Deep South, my greatest shock came with the discovery that if there was a Negro Catholic Church in the area, I had better attend that one and that I was not free to go to Mass for example in the "white" church, even if that happened to be much nearer. Most Catholics are under the illusion that the Catholic Church has no taint of this kind of segregation—that any Catholic can attend any Catholic church anywhere in the world. I recall that when a Negro companion first mentioned the "Negro Catholic Church," I told him there was no such thing. But in practice, there is this kind of distinction, isn't there?

I'm afraid there is. When we refer to the Negro church, it means two things: first, it means the church that is located in the Negro neighborhood, where Negroes are expected to attend, as people within any given parish are expected to attend their parish church; second, it means also that all Negroes in the vicinity, even if they happen to live miles away and are located in an area served only by a "white" church, are expected to come to the Negro church. Or, if the distance is inordinate, then Negroes can receive the Sacraments at the local "white" church, but usually with a special protocol—they sit in a section reserved for them and they do not go to the Communion Table until all whites have received and returned to their places.

Let me tell you something else. In an area where there is a Negro church, if we have one Mass or two Masses at the Negro church and a Negro cannot attend either of them for some legitimate reason; then, even though there might be two or three other Masses that he could attend in some "white" church, he has no obligation to attend any of them. I must say here that some churches *have* opened their doors to Negro Catholics. But in many areas this has not happened yet—and so the Negro who has missed Mass in the Negro church is under no obligation to attend Mass if that means going into a white church. I can't see this double standard of morality at all.

How does this happen? I mean by what authority does a Negro feel that if he has missed Mass in his home church he has no obligation to attend Mass elsewhere?

It's tradition and it's also practice. If he went to some white churches, he would simply be put out. This doesn't seem possible, but in practice it's true enough. He would not be accepted. I know of an instance where there was only one Negro Catholic in a town and the parish there paid someone to drive this person every Sunday to the nearest town where there was a Negro Catholic Church—this rather than let the person worship with them. I have people come to my church from as far as seventeen miles away, and some from towns ten or eight miles away.

How do these people react, Father?

They often talk with me about it. It is very hard—not that they mind the hardship of coming such distances—but it is hard for them to accept the fact that we Catholics preach one thing and then practice another.

Do they often protest?

Some do. Most often, though, they love their faith too much to do anything that might cause scandal. They try to "keep the peace" and offer up any sacrifice this causes. They keep silent.

Do you think silence in the face of such a gross religious injustice is wise, Father?

I doubt its wisdom when the silence serves to prolong the injustice. The longer we have this sort of scandal among Catholics, the more harm it does the Church. It alienates potential converts, both Negro and White.

Father, you received much of your seminary training in the South. Were you aware of any discrimination as a seminarian—either within or outside the seminary? Did the fact that you were a seminarian nullify any of the prevailing prejudices?

The fact that I am a priest has not nullified

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them, so they were certainly not nullified by the fact that I was a seminarian. There were certain churches I could not enter then just as there are churches and church activities—first communions, confirmations, Cana Conferences—where I am not allowed now, where I cannot say a scheduled Mass.

How are you made aware that you should not attend these things, Father? Does someone actually tell you that you should not—?

I have been told, yes. I have been told that I should not attend these functions or say a scheduled Mass.

So you are segregated as a priest also. Is this the same for all Negro priests in the South?

Well, let's say that in some areas, we Negro priests might be called second-class Christs, if that's possible.

We know that we do have the profound scandal of second-class Catholics—I mean this is a thing that is too well known to hide any longer, but when it is the scandal of a "second-class Christ" it becomes inconceivable. You are really a Negro first and a priest second, then?

The priesthood should take primacy over everything else, of course, but with us it's "a Negro first, a Negro second and finally a priest."

How do you react to this? This must burn you very, very deeply—not as August Thompson, but as a priest of the Catholic Church, does it not?

As a priest it does, because it degrades the priesthood. And that's why I try to do everything possible to right it. It's not just me—it's others—it's the scandal of it as it affects other Catholics that hurts the deepest.

Have you spoken this frankly to others—to priests and members of the hierarchy?

I think I have done my share of speaking frankly.

How has this been received?

I don't think I succeed in making myself clear. The simplest facts in this sort of problem tend to sound like complaining. It is suggested that I do not appreciate the complexities of the problem. But still, this does not answer the questions, nor, much more importantly, does it give me answers to the questions that others are asking.

Yes, now, you as a priest obviously cannot keep this completely from your parishioners. And eventually the whole Negro community knows about it. How do your parishioners and the potential converts in your community feel about this? Or do you hide it from them?

I do not think such things should be hidden, but I guess I do hide it as much as possible. I hide it because I know this is *not* the Church, but only the sinful acts of other Catholics—we have to make that clear. But nothing can really be hidden. Let me give you an example of how this affects new converts. Last year we went to a Christ the King rally where every parish was supposed to be represented. We went there to give honor to Christ the King of the whole world. At this rally, I was the only Negro in the procession. The Negro families who accompanied me—all of them converts of recent years—watched from the sidelines. They saw that we had only white altar boys and flower girls—no Negro children in that procession. Well, things like that stand up and cry to be seen, and you can be sure that the full impact of it hit every one of my parishioners. And they wanted to know *why*. "Why, Father, why?" They ask this all the time, and I have no answers. What can I tell them? How can I explain this sort of thing?

Father, what is being done by groups like Caritas, *the Grail and so forth?*

These groups, and a number of others, have done a tremendous amount of work—and still do a tremendous amount of work among Negroes. They are sometimes frowned upon by white Catholics and discriminated against.

Do you see any perceptible change for the better? What about Bishop Gerow's recent statement after the murder of Medgar Evers in Mississippi?

I was heartened to see this statement. I have it right here. I was particularly heartened by this. He said: "I am ashamed when I review the events of recent days and weeks. As a loyal son of Mississippi and a man of God, I feel in conscience compelled to speak out in the face of the grave racial situation in which we now find ourselves. This problem is unmistakably a moral

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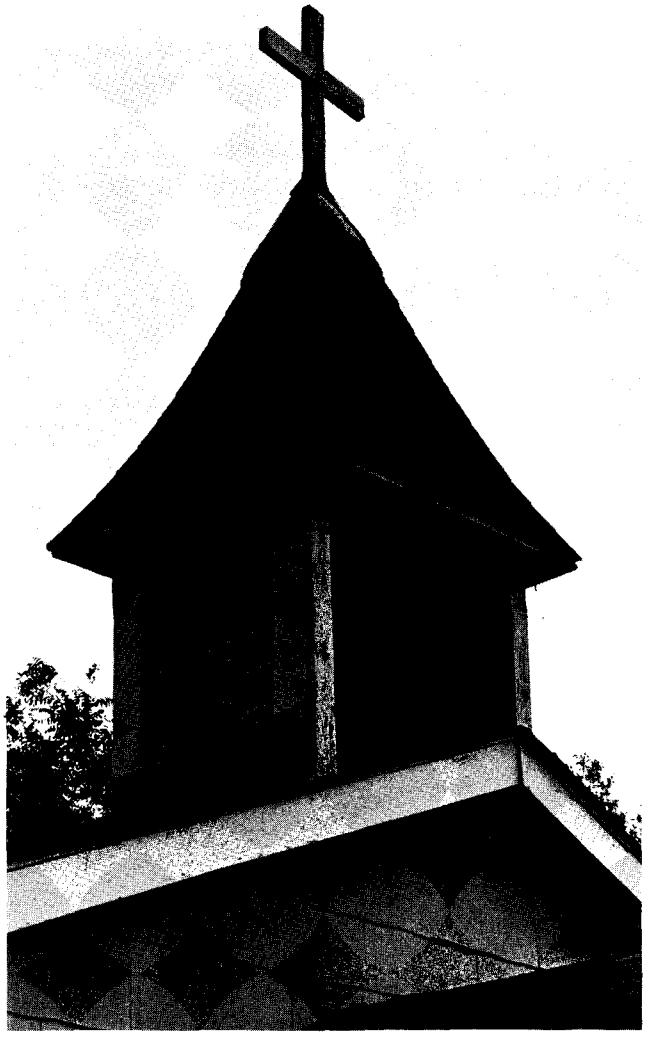

one. We need frankly to admit that the guilt for the murder of Mr. Evers and the other instances of violence in our community tragically must be shared by all of us. Responsible leadership in some instances has been singularly lacking." Certainly, he is including himself as part of that leadership and is accepting his part of the guilt. It took a humble man to make such a statement.

Many people seemed to feel that it was very late in the day for Bishop Gerow to speak—that he should have spoken up a long time ago.

I can only say that I am very glad and edified to see that he spoke so well when he did speak.

Father, I would like to get down to this question of religious leadership in the Deep South as it concerns specifically human and civil rights. We have two striking examples of action on the part of Catholic leaders—the work of Archbishop Rommel in New Orleans and of Archbishop Hallinan in Atlanta. What about other Bishops? Are we moving ahead, stagnating or falling back?

There have been many other moves, certainly, made with no fanfare. I myself do not believe in a lot of fanfare in connection with good actions. Out of the twenty-five dioceses in the South, twenty have desegregated schools. But even five dioceses represent a sufficiently large area to cause us grief. Yes, we are moving ahead, but of course in many cases, Negroes think it is a little too slow and that we are perhaps a little too cautious. Many Negroes still use the old "bone" symbol. They feel that white Catholics are throwing us the bone and telling us this is what we want and this is what we should have.

I'm not saying either that Negro Catholics want any kind of special treatment. They feel they are getting special treatment right now, and that is the trouble. All they want is to be treated exactly the same as any other Catholic. It cannot be repeated too often that Negroes are intensely aware of second-class citizenship in the Church; and this is the one place where it is absolutely devastating, no matter how some southern white Catholics might rationalize or try to justify it.

Father, on research trips through the Deep South, I have often encountered non-Negro Catholics who are deeply concerned. Almost invariably these people—and these are not Negroes—will ask me: "Why doesn't the Church speak now?" The Church has been "speaking" for a long time, of course. What they mean is why do not the local prelates speak up now. This was particularly true in Mississippi before Bishop Gerow issued his recent statement. Do you, as a Negro priest, feel that the silence of some of the Bishops is as loud as we Catholics sometimes seem to hear it?

I fear that the silence in some areas is quite loud. Many people think that this silence is a sign that those in authority agree with the situation as it exists. Whether they do or not, that is not for me to say. It does seem that the splendid statement of the American Bishops on racial justice has not always been implemented—or at

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least the Negro Catholic in the South can not always see evidence of its having been implemented. I feel that something must be done, and done fast, or the misunderstanding will grow. I mean the misunderstanding that grows with the illusion that local prelates condone second-class Christianity by their silence. This allows for a permissive climate of suppression. The whole tenor that is created by racists, political demagogues and so forth is not rebutted by this silence, as Bishop Gerow states, was certainly in part responsible for the murder of Medgar Evers. Now we cannot, must not, have an Evers in every diocese to awaken us to the need to shout from the housetops the teachings of the Church on justice and human dignity.

My impression, and I would like to see if it corresponds with yours, is that in the past few years Negroes — both Catholic and non-Catholic — have become progressively disillusioned with the Catholic Church, and this because of this tacit segregation and all it implies and our slowness to correct it.

That appears to be true, and it is an agonizing admission for me to make. But it is only by practicing what we preach that we can hope to undo this disillusion. I am not exaggerating when I say that this is a deeply disturbing and widespread feeling among Negroes. The apparent gains very often show up to Negroes as merely other aspects of tokenism. Even many of the authentic gains appear in a suspicious light.

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Have we lost ground in this area?

We have. There are many Catholics who do not go to Church because the pain of this kind of humiliation is simply unbearable. Think of going to Church, going to Communion, and in order to receive Christ you must wait until every white Catholic has gone to the Communion Table and returned to his seat—knowing that you might well be skipped if you approached the altar while some white person was still there. Think of that encouraging people to receive Communion. Many do, of course, but with a deep sense of sickness, and then resentment that even this great Sacrament should be clouded in indignity for them. Many are so affronted by this that they fall away or simply do not enter the Church—and think of this tremendous harvest of souls we lose by simply disgusting them away from the Church. Believe me, this is known by Negroes all over America, by Negroes who have never been in the South at all. Once disillusioned, it is most difficult to rekindle illusions—so the resonances of our fault here spread outward and outward to disgust souls everywhere.

Prejudiced Catholics, even the really bigoted ones, are surely unaware of all of this, aren't they, Father?

Oh, yes, they are unaware of most of it. And the difficulty lies in the fact that Southerners always think they know everything about "their Negroes." So the tragedy, as Gerald Vann once remarked, lies not in the fact that they are largely unaware of all this, but in the fact that they are unaware of their unawareness. I know this is the truth, and this is why I have spoken so frankly. Our intergroup conflicts have now become critical. We can see clearly to what horrors racism leads even when it walks in a benign guise, a religious guise. It dehumanizes all of us. Every soul that is disillusioned with Christianity is a soul for which we have some responsibility. Each day we see more Negroes disillusioned with what they call "the white man's Christianity." And each day we see more whites disillusioned by the same scandal; let's not forget that. Men are talking about the failure of Christianity and turning away—not because Christianity is a failure, God knows—but because it appears so through the bad actions of Christians.

What are the answers, Father?

The answers are not simple but the Church has given them. The Church has told us what Man is, a *res sacra* or sacred reality . . . a *res sacra* regardless of color. She has told us that strict justice admits of no modification, and that anything less than strict justice is simply injustice, regardless of what you choose to name it. Let every Catholic, no matter what his color, become a real Catholic, a true Catholic. To prevent a man from being fully Catholic and to expect him to be satisfied—these are both against the very nature of the Faith. Pope John XXIII crystallized it in his statement that truth requires the elimination of every trace of racism.

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Journal of a Trip South

by John Howard Griffin

SUNDAY

MIDNIGHT. I make these notes in Father's little front-room office at the Catholic rectory. A sense of uneasiness fills this house. Why? Because I, a white Catholic, am visiting a priest? No, that would be all right. But this priest is a Negro—and this is the Old South, and a white man does not stay in the home of a Negro, even the home of a Negro priest.

Father has retired, but something painful, almost nightmarish, keeps me awake. We expect the phone to ring at any moment with a Klan call. Do they know yet? I am aware of a pricking fear whenever I stand before a window.

Outside, in the darkness, the Negro section of this town surrounds us. Dogs bark and occasionally a rooster crows in the distance.

The contradictions here tax the brain. Father's parishioners have warned us to be cautious—and with good reason. The white racists would be outraged that a white man should spend the night in a Negro home—the home of a priest. This flaunts Southern traditions in this area. And yet if they caught me in this section of town visiting a Negro woman for immoral purposes, this would not affront them. This would be part of the "charm" of our Southern Way of Life.

The situation strikes me again because there is no place where I can take a priest to dinner, no place where we can even stop to have a cup of coffee together. I receive my nourishment in the homes of Father's friends. Only there can we sit down to table together. They receive me gallantly. The atmosphere of their homes is full of hospitality—they speak easily and minimize the clanging dissonance of a white man in their homes. If things were normal, I would be merely a co-religionist accompanying a priest friend to eat with them.

But things are not normal. I learned this evening that a host on a former occasion slept with his shotgun by his bed after we had left. Later, the Klan telephoned to warn him they were "watching his every move."

This very Klan shouts constantly about freedom, about the white man's right to freedom of association. But I am white and what freedom do I have here? They do not even want me to associate with a Negro priest. I know that I jeopardize the safety of any Negro who receives me into his home. And yet they receive me graciously.

Tonight, Father tactfully waited until almost dark to drive me to a home ten miles out of town. We entered this home only after it had become full night so that no one could see us. Once inside, our hosts put us at ease. But we were aware of our plight, the unspeakable plight in this land of the free: the need for secrecy because Negro and white Catholics were sitting down with a priest to take food. How symbolic, almost eucharistic, this act of eating together becomes in such an "underground" context. The Catacombs—we knew something of that.

We talked. We talked about the problems of Negro Catholics in a rigidly segregated area. Our host spoke without bitterness.

Where did his family attend church?

"In Father's church," he said as though surprised that I should even ask such a question.

"But don't you have a Catholic Church in this town?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Then you're in this parish, not Father's," I said.

"It doesn't work that way here," he said. "We go to the Negro Church—it's understood."

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"Do you mean you have to go all that distance to Mass when you have a Catholic Church right here?"

"We do that, yes," he said.

"Why?" I asked.

"To keep the peace . . . out of love for the Church," he said simply.

"What would happen if you attended Mass here?" I asked.

"It wouldn't be appreciated at all. We would probably be asked to leave."

"Not by the priest, surely?"

"No—the priest is all right. He has told us to call on him if ever we need help. No, the parishioners would not like it."

The conversation around this matter died. I realized that I was bringing up a subject that could not then be resolved.

And yet these were by no means "Uncle Toms." They were Catholics who realized fully the scandal of this kind of religious segregation, who suffered from it; but they had faith that this sort of thing had to right itself and would most certainly right itself.

Floorboards in this rectory creak with every footstep I take. I turn on the radio and find a Mozart Divertimento. It bounces from the walls of this room, setting a tone of such sanity, such health and charity that the surrounding night's menace appears profoundly obscene by contrast.

But the menace is there to taint everything. It is understood clearly that I can remain here only until the racist group in town discover my presence—and we are not at all sure that they do not already know. Certainly they knew that a Negro family had a white man to dinner here on my last trip through. The threat is tangible: perhaps a warning will come, or a molotov cocktail or a shot from out there in the darkness.

We say we don't care, but we are saying in reality: "If they kill or maim us, then let them and let it scandalize the world. We cannot bow this low to them. It is better to die than to bow down to a system that makes it wrong for a Negro priest to have a white co-religionist in his home."

The racist would say that my very presence—the white man's presence in the Negro's home—causes trouble. What trouble? Certainly no trouble in the Negro community. We feel that if they can sink to reprisals, then let them. That sounds dramatic—it is the reality of this place and this time.

In here, Mozart and coffee and lamplight. Out there the night. Out there the threat of violence hangs like a stench over everything—violence from racists who claim that Christ would bless them for any act they might commit against us in order to perpetuate this system.

Is our host at supper this evening now sleeping with his shotgun beside his bed? As we left his house, we reassured ourselves in whispers: "I don't think anyone saw us enter or leave this house."

"No—I'm sure no one saw . . ."

"It doesn't matter," the host's wife said. "We don't care if they did see—what can possibly be wrong with this?"

But we knew and we did care.

MONDAY

"It's six-ten, John." Father's voice aroused me from sleep.

"Thank you, Father," I groaned, my eyes closed, struggling to come to wakefulness.

Mass at 6:30. I walked through a soft cool light of dawn next door to the Church. The air was still, clear—no cars yet in the streets.

Mass in the low-ceilinged church with only Father, two altar boys, a matron and myself. I fought the drowsiness that insulated me from everything except the animal need to sleep.

Communion. A clumsy moment. If I got up and approached the altar rail first, the lady might hold back. (How quickly, when I was a Negro, I learned that hideous etiquette: you wait until the last White has received and returned to his seat before you approach the communion table. It offends him to receive next to a Negro. Sacramental lie.) But this matron surely knew who I was—such thoughts, such hesitations probably were not in her mind. Nevertheless, I waited until she had knelt at the altar rail, and then I walked up and knelt beside her.

Resentment that concentration on the Sacrament had to be spoiled by such considerations for her and for me. It quieted to deep silence at the

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moment of reception. Then I was aware of a movement beside me. The lady rose, genuflected and moved away. Floor boards announced each careful step she took in her effort to walk quietly back to her pew. There in the silence, I felt again the jolt of scandal, the true horror of some Catholic White who can feel and express protest when Catholic Negroes receive next to them. At such a moment of all moments—the moment of union with the Host—how could any soul recoil against the presence of another soul merely because it is encased in a darker flesh? I heard the lady kneel behind me and outside somewhere in the neighborhood the cheerful cackling of chickens.

I returned here to the house after Mass to fix myself a glass of strong instant coffee and wait for a later breakfast.

In this part of the world, many of us—white Catholics—are leaving Mass, going to breakfast, to the routine of our lives. We will go out from Mass and contribute our part to preventing Negroes from growing as men, from fulfilling their human potential. We may not do this actively, though many of us do; but we condone the system with our silence—we go along with it.

Seven a.m. Two groups of citizens, two groups of men made in God's image, prepare to go about the business of living and bread-winning—both groups victims of this system that allows the one group to suppress the other in a pious fraud of staggering completeness. I am talking specifically about Catholics. We do this and never lose the illusion that we are in a state of grace, that God smiles on us. I think of the story I heard here recently. A well-dressed Negro Catholic from out of the area went to Mass in a nearby town in an "all-white" Catholic Church. An elderly white woman remarked loudly to her daughter: "Did you see that nigger push his way up to the altar rail. I could have spit in his face." It was not so. He waited to go last. But the woman, I am sure, found her righteous anger in no way inconsistent with her state of grace.

I found myself remembering the words of that Negro tenant farmer whom Lillian Smith mentions. He was thrown off of his farm in midwinter, with no money and no place to take his family. He fell on his knees in the snow and prayed: "Oh God, break their hearts; give them tears." I heard myself muttering those words for those of us who are white Southerners. "Oh God, break our hearts; give us tears." Somehow, it is our only hope, our only health now. But who among us will feel it, see it? To most such a prayer makes no sense at all.

LATER

A brief walk outside. Father prays his office alone in the little cracker-box church. Hunger begins to trouble me. I return as Father's housekeeper arrives. The smiles, the welcome—"It's good to have you here, Mr. Griffin." But her eyes look searchingly at cars that pass, white men's cars some of them; and I can see that she wishes me inside. All around us in the morning sun, the unpainted wooden houses, the trees, the dusty streets.

I walk into the house, wondering what it is that makes all rectories feel and smell the same. Across the entrance hall, I can see into my room, the bed still unmade—a room in a rectory, simple, fragrant with cedar.

In the kitchen, I prepare another glass of instant coffee with faucet water while the housekeeper watches. I carry it to the front room office.

Now, the house promises breakfast. I hear the sizzle of eggs; the odor of bacon enlivens the atmosphere.

Father has entered the kitchen through the side door. I hear the housekeeper tell him: "Well, I saw coffee made a new way this morning—with just tap water."

Then some laughter and more talk.

"Yes, he drinks coffee all day and all night," Father says.

Breakfast in the kitchen. The sunlight poured in over my shoulder onto the table. It cast a magnificent light on the starched, flowered tablecloth and dazzled the glasses of orange juice, the plates of eggs, bacon, biscuits, butter and honey.

LATER NOON

The heat rises. The sun bakes the land, but despite the brilliance, a softness remains in the atmosphere. The air is still. Katydids rasp loudly in trees.

I drove to town for a haircut. The barber shop was filled with "sitters." They talked in quiet,

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concerned voices about the "niggers" and the "half-communist Federal government." I heard all of the tired clichés, all of the old southern cultural myths. Middle-aged and elderly men, their weather-worn faces seamed with worry, talked about "winning," talked about fighting for "our rights" all in condemning Negroes for seeking their rights. Apparently they are incapable of seeing such a contradiction. It would destroy them to see this truth that nevertheless stands before us and shouts to be seen.

They talked with an almost tearful sincerity. "We can still win yet, if we'll just stick together." This said in a melancholy tone that implied he knew the old way was lost. "If we'd all stood behind Faubus at Little Rock, we wouldn't be having this Birmingham mess. No, we haven't stuck together—so now each State has to stand up and fight all over again."

A young man stood up and said: "We'll win, old man, don't you worry. They's plenty of us and we're strong. We're going to see the niggers don't get the vote."

The old men, consoled, looked sadly at their hands.

"God damn, we better wake up, that's all I can say," one of them mumbled. He looked up toward me, a searing glance full of despair and pleading.

"Where you from, Mister?" he asked.

"Texas," I said.

"Niggers about to take over there?"

"We don't worry about it too much," I evaded.

"You sure as hell ought to," he said.

I glanced toward the back of the shop where a young Negro worked on at the shoe-shine stand as though he were deaf. I wondered what his thoughts were, how he restrained himself from walking out. Yet, an air of almost innocent concern marked the meeting, as though the men were sure the young Negro could not be offended because they were discussing the problem of protecting *him* too from the "communist" scheme of getting Negroes to exercise their rights as citizens. It was all too strange, strangest of all the fact that these men cannot, do not see that this ridiculous posture fools no one but themselves.

The small downtown area is "Old South," a village surrounded by cotton country. I drove back to the rectory through the Negro area—what the Whites here call "niggertown"—a clutter of grey-weathered houses and dust-powdered chinaberry and cottonwood trees. The humid air carried fragrance of fields into the town.

A place of blindness, ignorance, anguish, and yet physically an appealing place, redolent of the past. The older ones cannot bear to see it change—as though justice and dignity for all men would shatter the picture. They rationalize by saying and finally believing that restoration of civil rights to all men would be the end of what they know and love, the end of the "southern way of life," and the beginning of communism. What rot. But they talk of nothing else. And at night they can still integrate with Negro women whom the System prostitutes: it is a cherishable part of the old ways. I recall Sterling Williams' statement about whites: "Oh yes, they are much more democratic in their sinning than in their worship."

LATER

After lunch I set out to make some photographs of the town. I parked my car in front of the barbershop I visited this morning. The streets were almost deserted, but the few men who were out, watched me suspiciously as I made several shots, particularly one of Negroes at a Loan Agency. I hoped they would take me for a tourist, and I shot my pictures openly, obviously, the way a tourist would. But why should a tourist come to this little town? Certainly it was not a tourist attraction.

I felt sure that every Negro in the area knew who I was and that I was staying under the same roof with a Negro priest. This was all right. I could stay as long as no whites found it out and began to "worry" about it.

When I returned to the car, I got none of the usual friendly nods. I felt the chill of their looks, changed from the warmth I had experienced earlier in the day. I thought I had better get away from the downtown section before they questioned me too closely.

But my battery was dead. The car would not start. I sat in the furnace of the front seat and tried at intervals to get the motor going. No one offered help or advice.

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Finally, I went into the barber shop and asked whom I could telephone to come and get me started. They gave me a number to call. The answering voice said he would be there in a moment.

A strange, uncomfortable silence filled the shop after I replaced the receiver on its hook.

"Thank you for your help," I said as I headed for the door.

"Glad to help," an older barber said.

After a moment a large, heavily-muscled man arrived in a truck. He had a good face and he set about working on the car with great willingness to help. We finally got it started, both of us sweating through our clothes, and I followed him to his Service Station to have the battery charged.

I parked the car outside and took my camera case into the Service Station. An older man sat at the desk.

"Do you mind if I leave this in here while he fixes the car?" I asked.

He studied it intently for a time and read my name on the leather casing.

"Are you John Griffin?" he asked with interest, such interest I feared he knew who I was.

"Yes . . ."

"Well, let me shake your hand," he said with a broad smile.

I put the camera case down on his desk and, mystified, shook hands. Surely it was not every day that a southern white man would show such enthusiasm over meeting me.

"What you got in that case—a bomb?" he asked, beaming now with pleasure.

"No—a camera and films," I said. "I was afraid the heat would damage the negatives."

"Oh, I thought it was a bomb and you were headed for Birmingham," he said in a disappointed tone. "I was going to give you your gasoline free if it was."

"Not this time," I said, wondering why, if he knew me by name, he would think I could be involved in such an action. Then it occured to me that he perhaps thought I was that other John Griffin—a man noted in the South for his Klan activities. Surely that was it, for he began to talk compulsively about the "niggers" and what we could do about them.

"They're getting worse every day here, Mr. Griffiin," he said. The younger man came in to join us. His amiable face cramped with disgust when he heard us speak of the "niggers."

"I tell you what—and for sure. They do just one more thing and I'm ready to go home and get my shotgun and just clean them out," he said earnestly.

"What they been doing?" I asked.

"Hell, you know," the older man said. "They getting stiff-lipped, that's what."

"Oh, that," I said as though I knew what he meant. "How're they getting stiff-lipped around here?"

"You know—they've gone to calling their nigger women *Negro ladies* and our white ladies *White women*. Damnedest thing you ever saw."

He told me that he was trying to get Negroes fired from jobs held around town—to teach them a lesson. He ranted against Kennedy, said he wouldn't be surprised if someone assassinated the President if he ever dared come into that area. Another man entered and the station attendant introduced me as though I were a visiting celebrity.

"Well, we've got a good town, Mr. Griffin," the newcomer explained. "We've all been good to our niggers—always been above board with them, always paid them fair wages, and frankly, we ain't about to tolerate the way they're acting these days. Why, I heard the niggers here are all saving money every month out of their wages to buy guns and ammunition. It's going to be violence here—bad violence—but they're inviting it."

"We can take care of them," the older service-station man said. He lowered his head, glanced about to make sure we were not overheard, and said. "Mr. Griffiin, we've got this plan. When it comes March, it gets windy around here. Well, if the niggers haven't cut out all this ungodly crap about their rights by then, there's about fifty of us going to meet here some night, each of us take five-gallon cans of gasoline. And we'll put on masks and go right down through niggertown and burn the whole place out."

"Yeah . . ." the younger man nodded, "just get rid of the whole bunch. That's the only way to

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do it now."

I wondered how this harmonized with their previous claims of having always been open and above-board with Negroes.

The visitor shook our hands and left.

"He's a good man," the older one said warmly.

"Damn good," the younger one agreed.

"This town's full of good people," the older one said. "They been patient, but they won't stand for any foolishness."

"You just let the niggers try to put one of their kids—just *one*—over here in our white school," the younger one said, his voice rising in exasperation. "By God . . ."

"I'll tell you this, Mr. Griffin," the older one continued. "If they try *that*, we've got five hundred white men and we'll walk shoulder to shoulder through niggertown and kill every man, woman and kid—just like they was dogs."

"And we're going to get rid of some of these damned white nigger-loving preachers, too," the younger one said.

"They're the worst of all," the older man said.

"How's that?" I asked.

"Do you know what it says in the Bible about Simon Peter, Mr. Griffin?" the younger one asked. "You know, Simon Peter could walk on the water all right as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. But the moment he took his eyes *off* of Jesus, he just sank right under the water. Well, that's the way with our preachers here. As long as they kept their eyes on Jesus, they were fine. But they've done taken their eyes off of Jesus now. They've sold out for money to those integrationist bastards. We're going to get rid of every one of them."

"They just plain turned their backs on Jesus—so let them sink," the older man said. "We got no use for that kind of preacher here."

A pick-up truck stopped at the gas tanks out front. Both men walked out to service it. I watched them closely, for the driver was a Negro. They laughed, exchanged pleasantries, and the two service station men opened up the front of the car and worked hard to repair whatever was wrong. Their willingness to help, their expressions of relaxed good-will with the Negro were wholly incongruous to the attitude they had shown inside the station.

The truck-driver accompanied them inside to pay.

"Now, we done you a special favor, didn't we?" the attendant asked.

"Yes sir, you sure did," the Negro said eagerly.

"Now you're going to be like all the rest and keep coming back wanting more and more special favors," the older one said in a half-joking way.

I wached the driver carefully. His eyes hardened, but his voice remained respectful. "No Sireee," he said. "Now you know I've never asked you any special favors before. I'm not like *that*."

"You're *all* just alike," the older man laughed, "—get anything you can out of a white man."

"Not me. No sir. Not me," the Negro said, his eyes glowing with hatred, his voice wheedling. "I appreciate a favor. I don't ever abuse one. You know that."

The two attendants appeared unaware of the Negro's fury. They believed the sound of his voice rather than the look in his eyes.

When the pick-up had driven off, the older one turned to me. "He's a good nigger," he explained. "We always treat good niggers good—do anything we can for them."

I opened my mouth to ask, "Do you call that 'treating him good'?" But I did not say it. He had seen only what he wanted to see in the driver's reaction. He would not understand my question.

We talked more—the old anecdotes about how God separated the birds and other animals—as though that had anything to do with Man. Finally, when my car was fixed, I took leave of them in an atmosphere of almost unbelievable "Christian-Brotherhood" warmth, as though we were leaving a church meeting instead of one laden with violence and hatred.

I returned here to the rectory and told Father about the talk. When I repeated what they had said about marching through the Negro area and killing every man, woman and child "just like they was dogs," Father smiled and said gently: "Well, of course, we just might have something to say about that. Do they think Negroes here

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are just going to sit there and let themselves be massacred?"

My car was now known, and my name. We discussed hiding my car for fear someone would see it in front of the rectory and noise it around town that the white man in whom they had confided was visiting the Negro priest. We decided no, we would hide nothing. "You've got every right to be here, and I have every right to have you in my home," Father said.

I asked him if there were any communication between the Negro community and the whites.

"Of course not," he said, "nothing except the superficial give and take that we have everywhere in the South."

"Then how can this kind of violence be avoided," I said. "If you don't know one another, if you don't talk or try to create some understanding?"

"They think they do understand," he said. "They understand just what they want to. . . ."

At four, Father had a confirmation instruction class in the rectory. I strolled about outside, visited the church again.

When I stepped out of the church, I saw P. D. East, an old friend, famed editor of the *Petal Paper*, getting from his car. He had driven over to visit me from Hattiesburg, Mississippi. We went into the back door of the rectory and remained in the kitchen with cups of coffee. Father came into the kitchen, his face blank with puzzlement. Who was this white man with the Mississippi car licence? Had trouble already struck?

P. D. looked his sourest and said: "Father, I'm from the Mississippi Klan and we want this mingling CUT OUT."

Father glanced at me.

"It's UNCHRISTIAN, don't you know that," P. D. continued.

I quickly introduced them. Father wanted his confirmation class to meet us, so we went into the front room of the house and talked.

Father invited P. D. to spend the night, but we decided that no small southern town should be asked to tolerate both of us overnight.

"And besides, John makes me so nervous," P. D. added. "I never know when he's going to start taking those damned pills and turning black." (Referring to the medication I took when I toured the South as a Negro.)

We felt that it would be too risky to go out to anyone's house for supper that night, after I had been seen around town, and especially now that P. D. had appeared on the scene with his Mississippi licence plates.

One of the young men in the confirmation class insisted on providing the supper. He left and soon returned with an immense steak, a watermelon and salad greens. I cooked and the three of us had supper in the kitchen before P. D. drove away.

NIGHT

The tensions are tangible. Each time the phone rings, both Father and I go because if it is the Klan, both of us want to hear what is said.

The phone does ring, again and again. Each time it is one of his parishioners, calling to make sure everything is all right with us. Father prolongs the conversations, and I am glad he does, because so long as the phone is tied up, we cannot receive the calls we expect . . . and dread.

Certainly, we feel it is time for me to leave.

TUESDAY

We left early this morning for visits to Baton Rouge and an evening lecture in Lafayette. Also a radio interview on an independent station. The commentator promised me that I could say anything I pleased, and that nothing would be deleted from the broadcast.

We finally returned here long after midnight. Now, at four a.m. I prepare to retire. I am going back to Mansfield tomorrow.

WEDNESDAY

Driving out of the little town, two police cars picked me up at the outskirts and accompanied me, one in front, one behind, to the next town. There, another "team" took over and accompanied me on to the next. What does it mean?

They did not explain, did not stop me. But each time I slowed, they slowed; each time I accelerated, they accelerated. I did not feel that they were protecting me, but rather that they were making sure I left this area. Police are as bigoted as anyone else in such localities.

They accompanied me halfway across the State.

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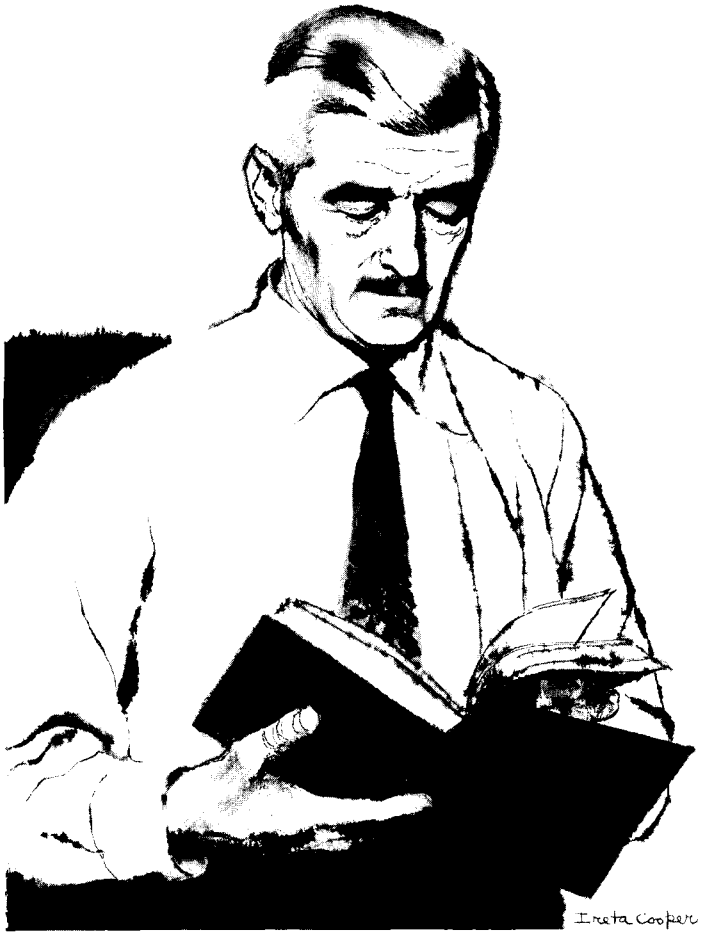

FAULKNER ON RACE

by Bradford Daniel

"LOVING ALL OF IT even while he had to hate some of it. Because he knows now that you don't love because; you love despite; not for the virtues, but despite the faults. He was born of it and his bones will sleep in it." Thus, the late William Faulkner described himself, his native Mississippi and the South several years ago.

This statement, perhaps more than any other Faulkner made, shed light on a question that had long puzzled many Southerners: Did Faulkner hate Mississippi and the South?

"Faulkner didn't write the truth about Mississippi," a local citizen told me in an Oxford drug store, only hours after Faulkner's funeral. "His books depicted our state in a false and perverted manner. It isn't like he wrote at all. Not at all! We'll be a long time living it down." When asked if he had read all or most of Faulkner's twenty-five books, he replied, "Only one or two of them."

The Oxonian, like a majority of Faulkner critics, apparently didn't appreciate what the Nobel Prize-winning author attempted to do throughout his entire body of work: to analyze and evaluate universal problems in the provincial setting of Northern Mississippi.

Faulkner had a deep love of the South, despite much criticism that had labeled him as a "South hater." Ignoring moonlight and magnolia, he pictured the South as a way of life that had disappeared forever, a region haunted by memories of the past and fearful of a commercialized future that Faulkner believed would make life impersonal and depthless.

He loved the South as much as any man, yet he was never afflicted with the Southern malady of being blinded by its prejudices and faults. In a letter written in 1955, Faulkner noted: "And those of us who were born in Mississippi and have lived all our lives in it, who have continued to live in it forty and fifty and sixty years at some cost and sacrifice simply because we love Mississippi and its ways and customs and soil and people; who because of that love have been ready and willing at all times to defend our ways and habits and customs from attack by the outlanders whom we believed did not understand them, we had better be afraid too—afraid that we have been wrong; that what we had loved and defended not only didn't want the defense and the love, but was not worthy of the one and indefensible to the other."

Calling him "probably the most famous Mississippian of his generation," the Jackson (Miss.) *Clarion-Ledger*, in an editorial that appeared the day following his death, commented: "It is only

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honest to say that he was a prophet who was but partly honored in his home country, while being accorded the topmost honors the literary world could pay . . . Faulkner wrote of a South of decadence which appeared headed for doom, and he so ably pictured this land that the entire literary world believes it to be, in part at least, a mirror of the Mississippi of yesterday, today and tomorrow, where the land and the people are exploited and dying by degrees. We think this is not an accurate picture of our commonwealth of today, a distortion of yesterday, and a fallacious forecast of tomorrow. What a pity this great talent could not have caught the inspiration of the flowering of our really superior youth, many of them at Ole Miss, so close at hand to him. Then he could have lightened and brightened the reflection of our state which he painted with an ability that truly was genius."

On the same day, in an editorial headed "William Faulkner's Greatness," the *Jackson Daily News* wrote: "Faulkner was a superlative storyteller and he made his characters around mythical Yoknapatawpha County spring to life and created a wicked, sordid image of Mississippi around the globe. Faulkner was a man of the world. How else could a man who thought pure, lofty thoughts all his life create such a prolific outpouring of sin, rape, perversion, violence and downright trash? . . . While we rejoice in his far-flung fame and recognize the fact he reached the pinnacle of applause for his literary accomplishments, William Faulkner was also a dirt dauber. He dealt in and prospered from filth, seemingly the first requisite for a successful book peddler in these days."

Perhaps the newspapers and the elected state officials of Mississippi, who saw fit not to attend his funeral, knew only too well that Faulkner painted, contrary to their public statements, an essentially true picture of Mississippi. Or, as Lon Tinkle, Book Editor of the *Dallas Morning News*, so cogently pointed out: "Faulkner allowed his readers the dignity of distinguishing the truth from mere facts, which in themselves can be untruthful." Certainly, no one other than a native son could have written so penetratingly about the area.

His neighbors and the community of Oxford mourned him modestly. But outside of the reaches of his homeland, he was mourned deservingly. Messages of condolences poured into the saddened little town from the great of this world. Pearl S. Buck commented in a public statement that Faulkner had written "permanently." And President John F. Kennedy eulogized: "It can be said with assurance of few men in any area of human activity that their work will long endure. William Faulkner was one of those men. Since Henry James, no author has left behind him such a vast and enduring monument to the strength of American literature. He was a guiding citizen of our civilization by virtue of his art."

IT HAS BEEN GENERALLY BELIEVED that Faulkner equivocated about racial justice, that he carefully averted any controversy over the conflict of the Negro in the South. Claiming that he was a "molder of words, not political opinion or policy," Faulkner sometimes did ignore controversial skirmishes.

However, in a little-known series of letters to Frank R. Alhgren, editor of the Memphis (Tenn.) *Commercial Appeal*, following the 1954 United States Supreme Court ruling on school desegregation, Faulkner carried on an extraordinary personal crusade in which he denounced segregation and demanded unrestricted education opportunity for all.

With the assistance of the librarian at the *Commercial Appeal* offices, I was able, squinting over the small type on the microfilm, to assemble the letters. The importance of the letters was immediately apparent. For Faulkner speaking—in any form—be it through the pages of a book, in a speech, or in the "Letters to the Editor" columns of a newspaper, is a part of the South speaking. The original letters have been retained for posterity by Paul D. Flowers, Book Editor for the *Commercial Appeal*. Mr. Flowers is a close friend of the Faulkner family and was considered one of Faulkner's few "literary friends."

The letters appeared in the newspaper's "Letters" columns between February 20 and April 17, 1955. Why did Faulkner choose to use a Tennessee newspaper for his outlet? Probably because of

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the large circulation and valuable prestige that the *Commercial Appeal* enjoys. One of the leading journals of the South, the *Commercial Appeal* is the most respected voice in the tri-state area of Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas. Although of excellent quality, *The Oxford Eagle* is a weekly newspaper and reaches few people. However, in years past, Faulkner had occasionally bought space in the *Eagle* to express his views on current local issues. The newspapers in the state capitol in Jackson possibly would not have published the controversial letters.

His letter, published March 20, 1955, and headlined "Faulkner Says Mississippi's Schools Not Even Good Enough For Whites," read:

TO THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL:

We Mississippians already know that our present schools are not good enough. Our young men and women themselves prove that to us every year by the fact that, when the best of them want the best of education which they are entitled to and are competent for, not only in the humanities but in the professions and crafts—law and medicine and engineering—too, they have to go out of the state to get it. And quite often, too often, they don't come back.

So our present schools are not even good enough for white people; our present state reservoir of education is not of high enough quality to assuage the thirst of even our white young men and women. In which case, how can it possibly assuage the thirst and need of the Negro, who obviously is thirstier, needs it worse, else the Federal Government would not have had to pass a law compelling Mississippi (among others of course) to make the best of our education available to him.

That is, our present schools are not even good enough for white folks. So what do we do? Make them good enough, improve them to the best possible? No. We beat the bushes, rake and scrape to raise additional taxes to establish another system at best only equal to that one which is already not good enough, which therefore won't be good enough for Negroes either; we will have two identical systems neither of which are good enough for anybody. The question is not how foolish can people get, because apparently there is no limit to that. The question is, how foolish in simple dollars and cents, let alone in wasted men and women, can we afford to be?

This letter, signed "William Faulkner, Oxford, Mississippi," naturally attracted much attention. Letters of support and protest poured into the newspaper. One of the protest letters was from State Representative Dave Womack of Humphreys County, Mississippi. Representative Womack wrote, in a letter published March 27, 1955: "I read with interest a letter from William Faulkner published in your March 20, 1955, issue, wherein he expresses his views about the schools of Mississippi. Of course, we are only mortal men and not Nobel Prize winners, and we bow to his higher intellect. However, we feel that being a true citizen of the state of Mississippi, which I am sure he is, if he has a better plan than those proposed by some of our legislative leaders, he should come forward with it. We are looking forward to hearing any suggestions that he may have. Also, we would like to know how many degrees he holds from these inferior Mississippi schools of which he writes." (Representative Womack, in another letter published on April 10, 1955, wrote: "What other state can boast a sixth grade graduate as a Nobel Prize winner?", in an obvious dig at Faulkner.)

Another letter, also published in the March 27, 1955, issue and signed C. J. Martin of Greenwood, Mississippi, dissented: "Mr. Faulkner's letter in the Commercial Appeal of March 20 poses a question as to the advisability of promoting the dual system of schools. He creates an impasse while offering no concrete solution. The theme of the letter seems to suggest a concentration on improvement of the present schools without building new Negro schools, with the subsequent integration of the races. As lofty as the aims of an idealist may be, reality must be faced. Call it prejudice, antipathy, or tradition, the fact remains that the white people of Mississippi do not wish to attend school with the Negroes. Legislation and Supreme Court rulings do not abolish nor alter the feelings of a people dedicated to the preservation of their established culture. The rightness or wrongness has no bearing on the immediate solution of this problem. Mississippi is taking the only course it can under existing circum-

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stances. Mr. Faulkner has, however, performed a service in the stimulation of our thinking about this problem and the righteous questioning of methods."

Faulkner's answer to these and other letters appeared on April 3, 1955, under the title, "Faulkner Tells Why He Believes Equality In Education Is Essential":

TO THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL:

I have just read the letters of Mr. Neill, Mr. Martin and Mr. Womack in your issue of March 27, in reply to my letter in your issue of March 20.

To Mr. Martin and Mr. Womack's first question: whatever the cost of our present statewide school system is, we will have to raise that much again to establish another system equal to it. Let us take some of that new fund and make our present schools, from kindergarten up through the humanities and sciences and professions, not just the best in America but the best that schools can be; then the schools themselves will take care of the candidates, white and Negro both, who had no business in them in the first place.

Though I agree that this only solves integration; not the impasse of the emotional conflict over it. But at least it observes one of the oldest and soundest maxims: If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

Then the rest of the new fund could establish or improve trade and craft schools for the ones whom the first system, the academic one, had already eliminated before they had had time to do much harm in the terms of their own wasted days and the overcrowded classrooms and harried underpaid teachers which result in a general leavening and lowering of educational standards; not to mention making the best use of the men and women we produce. What we need is more Americans on our side. If all Americans were on the same side, we wouldn't need to try to bribe foreign countries which don't always stay bought, to support us.

To Mr. Womack's last question: I have no degrees nor diplomas from any school. I am an old veteran sixth-grader. Maybe that's why I have too much respect for education that I seem unable to sit quiet and watch it held subordinate in importance to the color of the pupil's skin.

Under the heading, "Faulkner Would Fit Schooling To Students' Ability and Interest," published April 10, 1955, Faulkner urged:

TO THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL:

I have read Mr. Murphy's letter in your issue of April 3. I also received one from Dr. Flinsch, Dean, School of Engineering, Mississippi State College, along the same line. If my letter stated or implied any facts which are incorrect, I retract and apologize.

My aim was not to injure our present school system, but to take advantages of whatever changes in it the future holds, to improve our schools from their present condition of being a sort of community or state-supported baby sitters, where the pupil is compelled by law or custom to spend so many hours of the day, with nobody but often-underpaid teachers to be concerned about how much he learns.

Instead of holding the educational standard down to the lowest common denominator of the class or grade group, let us raise it to that of the highest.

Let us give every would-be pupil and student the equality and right to education in the terms in which our forefathers used the words equality and freedom and right; not equal right to charity, but equal right to the opportunity to do what he is capable of doing, freedom to attain the highest of standards—provided he is capable of it; or if he is not competent or will not work, let us learn early, before he has done much harm, that he is in the wrong occupation.

If we are to have two school systems, let the second one be for pupils ineligible not because of color but because they either can't or won't do the work of the first one.

Faulkner's letter to the *Commercial Appeal* on April 17, 1955, was inspired by an April 10, 1955, letter signed merely "Student, Dorsey, Mississippi." The student's letter, headlined "Faulkner Was Right," noted: "It is about time someone spoke the truth about the educational system like the greatest person in our state and America's greatest author did recently in his letters to this paper. I do think we have one great institution in the state of Mississippi. Ole Miss, to me, is one

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of the greatest universities in the United States. I plan to enter Ole Miss next year and I favor Negroes entering that school and other public schools of Mississippi. So long as the races are pulling against each other (educationally, that is) they will succeed only in pushing both races down. For both to pull together we can raise the standards of both races. I only hope the people of my state will wake up to the fact if they lower the educational standards of the Negroes as they seem to be now doing they will lower the standards for the whites as well. Long live Mr. Faulkner!"

Faulkner's letter of April 17 was headlined "Faulkner Urges Student Survey: Wants Them Questioned About Integration." It urged:

TO THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL:

I would like to say "Well done" to the writer of the letter signed "Student" from Dorsey, Miss., in your issue of April 10th. Let us make a canvass of the young people of Mississippi who are attending our present schools and will attend the integrated ones if or when they come, for their opinion of it; they are certainly interested parties.

We in the South are faced by two apparently irreconciliable facts: one, that the National Government has decreed absolute equality in education among all races; the other, the people in the South who say that it shall never happen.

These two facts must be reconciled. I believe there are many young people, too, in Mississippi who believe they can be, who love our state—not love white people specifically nor Negroes specifically, but our land; our climate and geography, the qualities in our people, white and Negro both, for honesty and tolerance and fair play, the splendors in our traditions and the glories in our past—enough to try to reconcile them, even at the risk which the young writer from Dorsey took, despite the fact that he didn't sign his name. And what a commentary that is on us; that in Mississippi communal adult opinion can reach such emotional pitch that our young sons and daughters dare not, from probably a very justified physical fear, sign their names to an opinion adverse to it.

In his letter on February 20, 1955, Faulkner's subtle wit was at its best. In a letter captioned "Faulkner Solves Rat Hole Puzzle; Just Enough To Go Round Once, He Discovers," he lashed out at unfair criticism of the Southern Negro:

TO THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL:

I have read with interest the "Letter to the Editor" of Mr. Wolstenholme, of Hohenwald, Tenn., in your issue of Sunday, the 6th, in which he suggested that the Negro inhabitants of Memphis slums could nail up their ratholes if they were not too shiftless to do it; and that the white investigating groups would do much better to come to Lewis County, where they could find plenty of white people deserving of their offices.

Does this mean that, for every rathole Shelby County Negroes have, Lewis County white folks have two? Which can't be right, since white folks, not being Negroes, are not shiftless; and therefore, for every rathole which a Shelby or Lewis County, Tenn., or a Lafayette County, Miss., Negro has, a Shelby or Lewis County, Tenn., or Lafayette County, Miss., white men can't have any, which won't hold water either, since, for the simple reason that there are more rats than people, there is some inevitable and inescapable point at which the white man, no matter how shiftless, is going to have one rathole.

So, at what point on the scale of the Negro's non-ratholes does the white man gain or earn one or anyway have one rathole? Is unshiftless twice as unshiftless as shiftless, giving the white man twice as many ratholes as the Negro man, or does this get us into the old insoluble problem in amateur physics about how much is twice as cold as zero?

A STRONG PLEA for equal right to opportunity for all races in the South was made by the author in a 1955 address before the twenty-first annual meeting of the Southern Historical Association at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis. The text of that address presented valid arguments that our embattled Southland of the present-day might well consider.

For the sake of argument, let's say that, a white Southerner or maybe even any white American, I too curse the day when the first Yankee shipmaster bought the first penful of Negro captives from the Arab dealer and brought them across

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the middle passage into American slavery.

Because that doesn't matter now. To live in the world of A.D. 1955 and be against equality of race or color is like living in Alaska and being against the snow. We have already got the snow; what we must do now is plan how to live with it. Live with it, not just beside it, because the day when that would have been enough is past, too.

Only this snow is a good deal more serious than the denial of an accomplished fact. To stand against equality on grounds of race or color can invite a situation in which the whole white and/or free world as we know it can disappear.

We think of the world situation today as a precarious and explosive balance of two irreconcilable ideologies confronting each other; which precarious balance, once it totters, will drag the whole world into the abyss along with it.

That's not so. Only one of the forces is an ideology, an idea. Because the second force is the simple fact of man, the simple belief of individual man that he can and should and will be free. And if we who so far still free, want to continue to be free, all of us who are still free had better confederate fast, with all others who still have a choice to be free—confederate not as black people nor white people nor pink nor blue nor green people, but as people who still are free with all other people who still are free; confederate together and stick together, too, if we want a world or even a part of a world in which individual man can be free, to continue to endure.

And we had better take in with us as many as we can of the non-white peoples of the earth who are not completely free yet but who want to be and intend to be, before that other force which is opposed to individual freedom, befools and gets them.

Time was when the non-white man was content to—anyway, did—accept his instinct for freedom as an unrealizable dream. But not any more; the white man himself taught him different with that phrase of his—the white man's—own culture which took the form of colonial expansion and exploitation based and morally condoned on the premise of inequality not because of individual incompetence, but of mass race or color.

As a result of which, in only 10 years, we have watched the non-white peoples expel, by bloody violence when necessary, the white man from all of the Middle East and Asia which he once dominated. And into that vacuum has already begun to move that other and inimical power which people who believe in freedom are at war with—that power which says to the non-white man: "We don't offer you freedom because there is no such thing as freedom; your white overlords whom you just threw out have already proved that to you. But we offer you equality; at least equality in slavedom; if you are to be slaves, at least you can be slaves to your own color and race and religion."

We, the Western white man, who does believe that there exists an individual freedom above and beyond this mere equality of slavedom, must teach the non-white peoples this while there is yet a little time left. We, America, who are the strongest force opposing communism and monolithicism, must teach all other peoples, white and non-white, slave or (for a little while yet) still free.

We, America, have the best chance to do this because we can do it here, at home, without needing to send costly freedom expeditions into alien and inimical places already convinced that there is no such thing as freedom and liberty and equality and peace for all people, or we would practice it at home.

The best chance and the easiest job, because our non-white minority is already on our side; we don't need to sell them on America and freedom because they are already sold; even when ignorant from inferior or no education, even despite the record and history of inequality, they still believe in our concepts of freedom and democracy.

That is what America has done for them in only 300 years. Not to them, for them, because to our shame we have made little effort so far to teach them to be Americans, let alone to use their capacities to make ourselves a stronger and unified America—the people who, only 300 years ago, were eating rotten elephant and hippo meat in African rain-forests, who lived beside one of the biggest bodies of inland water on earth and never thought of a sail, who yearly had to move

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by whole villages and tribes from famine and pestilence and human enemies without once thinking of a wheel, yet in only 300 years in America produced Ralph Bunche and George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington, who have yet to produce a Fuchs or Rosenberg or Gold or Greenglass or Burgess or Meredith or Hiss, and for every prominent communist or fellow-traveler like Robeson or Richard Wright, there are a thousand white ones.

I am not convinced that the Negro wants integration in the sense that some of us claim to fear he does. I believe he is American enough to repudiate and deny by simple American instinct any stricture or regulation forbidding us to do something which in our opinion would be harmless if we did it, and which we probably would not want to do anyway.

I think that what he wants is equality, and I believe that he too knows there is no such thing as equality per se, but only equality TO—equal right and opportunity to make the best one can of one's life within one's capacity and capability, without fear of injustice or oppression or threat of violence.

If we had given him this equal right to opportunity 90 or 50 or even 10 years ago, there would have been no Supreme Court decision about how we run our schools.

It is our white man's shame that in our present Southern economy, the Negro must not have economic equality; our double shame that we fear that giving him more social equality will jeopardize his present economic status; our triple shame that even then, to justify ourselves, we must becloud the issue with the purity of white blood.

What a commentary that the one remaining place on earth where the white man can flee and have his blood protected by law, is Africa—the source and origin of the people whose presence in America will have driven the white man to flee from defilement.

Soon now all of us—not just Southerners nor even Americans, but all people who are still free and want to remain so—are going to have to make a choice. We will have to choose not between color nor race nor religion, nor between East and West, either, but simply between being slaves and being free. And we will have to choose completely and for good.

The time is already past when we can choose a little of each, a little of both.

We can choose a state of slavedom, and if we are powerful enough to be among the top two or three or 10, we can have a certain amount of license—until someone more powerful rises and has us machine-gunned against a cellar wall. But we cannot choose freedom established on a hierarchy of degree of freedom, on a caste system of equality like military rank.

We must be free not because we claim freedom, but because we practice it. Our freedom must be buttressed by a homogeny equally and unchallengeably free, no matter what color they are, so that all the other inimical forces everywhere—systems political or religious or racial or national—will not just respect us because we practice freedom. They will fear us because we do.

Addressing the graduating class of the Oxford, Mississippi High School in the summer of 1951, Faulkner issued another strong statement on freedom and human dignity. He told the graduates: "*. . . So never be afraid. Never be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice and lying and greed. If you, not just you in this room tonight, but in all the thousands of other rooms like this one about the world today and tomorrow and next week, will do this, not as a class or classes, but as individuals, men and women, you will change the earth. In one generation all the Napoleons and Hitlers and Caesars and Mussolinis and Stalins, and all the other tyrants who want power and aggrandisement, and the simple politicians and time-servers who themselves are merely baffled or ignorant or afraid, who have used or are using, or hope to use, man's fear and greed for man's enslavement will have vanished from the face of it.*"

BRADFORD DANIEL *is a Texas journalist and a former white editor of* Sepia Magazine.

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THE MARGINAL MAN

By Thomas N. Williams

THOMAS N. WILLIAMS, *born in Chicago, is a graduate of Stanford University. He is administrative assistant to a California school district and an officer of the local Catholic Interracial Council.*

BY THE GRACE OF GOD, and the facts of personal history, I am a curious mixture of white and black. For almost every Negro ancestor who has contributed to my existence, I have an almost equal number of Irish, French, Pennsylvania Dutch, Choctaw Indian, and English ancestors who have also made me what I am. And yet, despite the presence of quarts of white blood, in this country I am a Negro and I always will be, equally by the grace of God and by the insistence of the great white segment of American society. I would have it no other way.

In addition to this thing called blood, which makes me almost half-and-half, I am an educated man and I don't speak with the drawl so dear to the hearts of American movie-goers. Indeed, my experiences would be less if I were vocally well within the terms of the traditional image, as later on I will show. The fact is that I am a marginal man, not entirely Negro and yet not white. I am somewhere in between.

Being marginal in our society is unusual. To be marginal is to be on the edge, on the verge of something. Or better, to be marginal is to be on the fringe of something, to be not fully incorporated into that something, and yet still to be a basic part of it.

If we begin with this fragmented concept of marginal and place it in a racial frame of reference, the word begins to take on a difficult meaning. The two worlds of black and white that exist in our society today are separated. To be on the fringe of both of these worlds, not fully incorporated into either, and still to be a basic part of both, is my destiny.

One of the most deceptive and unreliable means of evaluating people is to classify them on the basis of the amount of skin pigmentation. Whether a person is white or black, light or dark, has a great deal to do with the way in which he is accepted into our society. But this test is very deceptive because most people try to categorize persons with a dark complexion into the Negro classification and this, of course, just cannot be done. There are Latins from Mexico and South America who have dark complexions; there are also Arabs, Indians, Jews, and Orientals whose skin color is brown or tan, and in some

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cases almost black. The phenomenon is not at all uncommon in America. And since many of us have built-in reservations about people with color there automatically goes up a retaining wall when we meet someone colored. Because of the current situation in this country and the long tradition which has classified Negroes and others as second-class human beings, the pronounced difference in the color of a person's skin makes it exceedingly easy to single him out and to keep him separated from the main stream of society. In short, it makes it easy to discriminate against him and it makes it very easy to reinforce our prejudices against people of color. We expect to see Negroes in certain places in our society and in certain occupations such as entertainers, athletes, or domestics, to name just a few. If by some chance we encounter Negroes out of this context we are bewildered and wonder why this is so. The simple fact is that we cannot grasp the idea that all Negroes are not cut out to be entertainers, professional athletes or domestics, and also that Negroes have feelings that are genuinely human and subject to much abuse.

There is a tendency on the part of white people to preserve all the stereotyped images that they have built up in their minds about Negroes in regard to their "place" in our society. He is illiterate, lazy, profane, ready to dance for us at the drop of a dime, etc., etc., etc. These are merely a few of the prevailing attitudes that exist in the traditional white community. And by the traditional white community I am referring to those communities who have little or no contact with Negroes in any continuous context—isolated white suburbs. There is little or no involvement at the human level with the Negro and so the age-long misconceptions about Negroes go on and on. Lack of association breeds ignorance, suspicion and fear on both sides. This then is the traditional white society, in part, as I see it; as I have experienced it.

And then there is the traditional Negro society as it exists in this country, also as I have seen it. Most Negroes in this country who have had little or no contact with white people harbor a deep fear and mistrust of most white people. Their daily experiences in the Negro ghetto or with whites outside of the ghetto force upon them a role which they dare not turn down. It is a role which carries with it the constant fear that the white man is after them. It is a role that carries with it the consciousness that their tragic existence is perpetuated by the fact that the white world cuts them out and keeps them out of all situations which might help them to better their lives. The traditional Negro society is wrapped in the humiliations and tragic circumstances of the ghetto—the grimy ghetto where the store front churches offer salvation later, but not now; the vicious ghetto where poverty and disease and vermin murder the hope of millions of human beings. This is the ghetto from which springs the traditional Negro society as we know it today, and whether this ghetto is a part of a northern city or part of the Southern countryside makes no difference at all because it is perpetuated by the ignorance and apathy of the white community.

My position as a marginal man is in between these two traditional segments of our society, the black and the white. Tracing my ties to both worlds makes it very evident to me that I am a product of both without really belonging totally to either one. My experience of growing up in a predominately white neighborhood in Chicago enabled me to share to a certain extent the attitudes that many white children had then and still have today toward Negroes. As a child I knew I was a Negro but in thinking back I never really believed it. My skin was brown and certain members of my family were brown, but I could not really understand what made a Negro different from other people or from the children I knew in the neighborhood. I was told by my parents that it made no difference what the color of my skin was because it was the intrinsic worth of the person that mattered.

I can recall the pre-school children I played with and how thoroughly race conscious they were. Obviously they had been taught racist ideas or were being exposed to them by their parents. Some of the children (and these were children four and five years old) were taught that Negroes were bad. They could not play with me

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because I was a "nigger." Of course at that young age, I did not know what a "nigger" was and I was sure that I was not one. But the thing that stung was that they would not play with me because somehow I was different; for a reason I could not understand. We spoke the same language, enjoyed the same types of games and toys and in general had fun together. In fairness, not all the children acted this way and there were good times which helped to gloss over what unpleasantness there was.

My first contact with the traditional Negro society came when I was seven or eight years old and it came in bits and pieces. My first sight of a Negro ghetto was as strange to me as a city might be to the country boy on his first sight of fields of asphalt. The buildings were shabby and the sidewalks and streets were littered with junk. The store-front churches fascinated me and I asked my mother which ones were Catholic. The people I saw were all Negroes. They seemed to move about with a freedom which was unknown to me. The Negro children, apparently, were not subjected to the same types of discipline that I experienced. They were outgoing—running, yelling, doing anything they wanted to do. And no one seemed to care.

It never occurred to me to ask my mother why the Negroes lived in one section of town. I suppose I thought, as many white people think today, that this is what the Negroes wanted: we have ghettos because the people who live there like it and do not wish to live in an open community.

Perhaps the most significant thing that occurred to me while I was growing up in Chicago was my religious training, or Catholic experiences would be a better term. My indoctrination concerning Catholicism was early and effective. The word "Catholic" became synonymous with everything that was good and solemn and right. To be a Catholic was to be a cut above everyone else who was not Catholic; and that included a few Protestants and Jews who lived in the neighborhood. The fact that I was a part of a large Catholic community made it easier to forget that I was a Negro and I could identify myself with a respectable and accepted group in society. The concept of Catholicism became for me the essence of perfection. Very seldom in my early years do I remember associating anything bad with the word "Catholic." It was always expedient not to blame the priests or the nuns for the injustices facing the Negro, especially for the things that went on within the Church. The members of my family—my brothers and sisters—were always taught to pay the highest respect to the clergy and never to criticize them. I can remember attending a public school in the neighborhood for the first four years of my elementary education, when my friends were in the Catholic school. I can also remember asking my mother why I could not attend St. Thomas the Apostle School like the rest of my Catholic friends. The feeble answers always came back that we did not have enough money. Somehow, through my older brothers, I learned that the real reason was because we were colored. How my poor mother must have suffered through that ordeal! But even then in my child's mind it was not the fault of the priests or the nuns. The fault lay in some strange force (could it be some obscure system?) which no one seemed to know about and which I was unable to discover with my limited knowledge.

In later years, in the Catholic grammar school and high school, there were many things which filled my mind. One of them was the idea that even though a Negro was a Catholic he still was not as good as a white Catholic. This was a terrible thought because I knew it was so true. The white Catholics were guilty of the sin of racial prejudice and this sin I had to face in my daily Catholic life. There was never anything said about Negroes in the Catholic schools that I attended—nothing good or bad. This was twenty years ago and unfortunately the situation has changed little today, as most white Catholic children carry on their parents' traditional prejudice—a sad commentary on Catholic education.

I BEGAN TO REALIZE something during my early teens that my role in society was to be different from those around me. The cold and obvious reality of being a Negro began to crowd itself into my life. I remember so clearly the time

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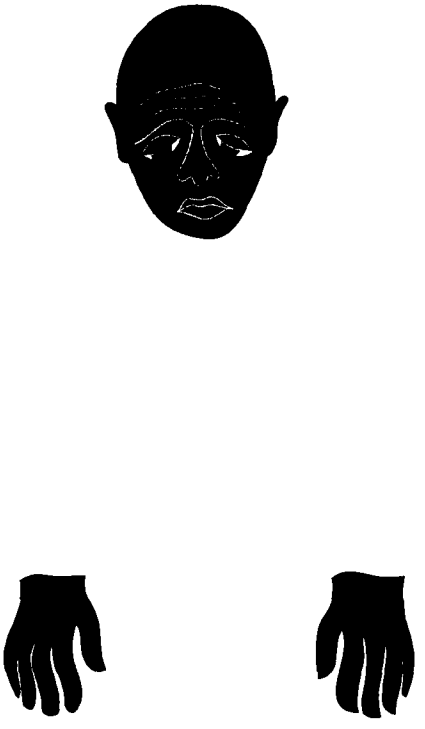

I applied for a summer job as an office boy. I had just finished my first year of high school and had been told of this opening. Having talked to the man in charge over the phone, I was given the job and even told the salary that I would be paid. My heart was pounding as I filled out the application and then presented myself to be interviewed. I was about to enter the adult world. The aging, gray-haired executive almost disintegrated before my eyes when he saw that I was colored. He began fumbling for excuses after he had read only part of my application. The interview was short and awkward. It was decided that since I could not drive a car (what relevance *this* had, I can't say) there would be no job for me. I was speechless and humiliated—and angry. I will never forget the way the white people in the office looked at me when I left. They were probably glad that this same thing could never happen to them.

There is a small fragment of that moment of humiliation that lingers with particular clarity. The executive, as if to make up for what he had done, wanted to give me carfare home, and as he hesitated, I watched his soft white hands fondle the silver coins that would pay my way out of his life. Today I think of Judas; then all I could feel was shame.

But that occasion proved to be a major breakthrough for me. It shook me out of my apathy—at fourteen, I had to be a man. Shooting for the top and falling short leaves one a strange feeling of satisfaction, even though the pall of defeat hangs over the effort. There were so many things that I thought about after that rejection, and one of them was the finding of security. How wonderful it would have been to have been white on that occasion! How secure! Security that comes from being like everyone else around you—that false sense of security that lulls you into apathy and inaction, with mediocrity as your only goal—this was not for me. I did not want to be like everyone else and the fact that my skin was brown forced me into a role that was to carry me a long way toward being an individual and a man—a marginal man—in this society. I was a Negro all right. The gentleman in the office had reminded me of that, but I was not the type

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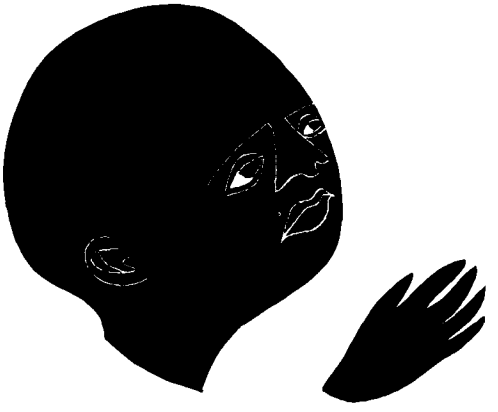
of Negro he wanted me to be, a Negro with a broken spirit, emasculated and sapped of his self-respect and integrity. No, I was not that type at all and there was nothing he could ever do that would make me so. It was as my declaration that I would be something someday in spite of the fact that I was colored, in spite of the tremendous odds that threatened every aspiration. But that was thirteen years ago and in thirteen years much has happened. I have become an educated man. I can not help wondering if that old white gentleman with his silver coins is still there in that office interviewing office boys. Would things be different if I applied for the same job today? I like to think so, but I am afraid they would not be.

There were so many things that went through my mind during that coming-of-age period, and I did not have all the answers then. To my friends, I was just "Tom." I was not colored or Negro, but just one of the boys. You have heard it said from time to time that a few people in this country do not recognize color. They just see an individual for what he is. That may sound ridiculous to a lot of people, but there is something plausible about that statement. It has been my experience that the closer I get to people, the more we each become individuals and then color seems to disappear completely. This can be true of people everywhere if they will free themselves from preconceptions and try to see each person for what he is, not what he *appears* to be. Getting to know and to *like* a colored person makes one color blind. There is a funny psychology that works here, but it really does work. I know. But people are people, and even the white friends who accepted me for what I was would not accept other Negroes who had been reared in the traditional Negro society. This never ceased to amaze me.

There was rejection and there was acceptance during those middle years and I never knew when one or the other would occur. A certain boy with whom I played football in high school approached me one day and casually began talking about the race question. He was Irish and came from that section of Chicago's south side where James T. Farrell grew up and later wrote about. One of the things that Farrell described in his novels and short stories was the hatred of the whites for the Negro. He wrote about the fights and reflected upon the intense feeling that existed against Negroes on Chicago's south side, and still does to this day. Farrell's big failure, it seems to me, to become a major writer was the fact that he never examined the reasons behind the hatred that he so vividly described in some of his books and short stories. And it was the same situation with my friend. He told me that where he came from "black was black and white was white"; this phrase reflected what Farrell wrote about. He told me that I was different. He had told his white friends that "Tom was different." I was different from most Negroes whom he had met or knew. But I knew that he did not know how or why I was different. I knew this at the time but could not have explained it to him. The reason he liked me was that I did not represent the image that he had built up in his mind concerning the stereotyped Negro, and he was willing to forget his prejudice for a short



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time in order to accept me as an individual. One of the reasons I was different was because I had escaped the ghetto.

I DEVELOPED ASSURANCE during those years, especially in my senior year in high school. Despite some rejections because I was colored, I still was not bitter but rather more determined than ever to "beat the rap." I noticed at this time that some of my Negro friends were having a hard time. They were unsure of themselves, most likely because of the constant rejections they had experienced because they were colored, and they had no desire whatsoever to associate with the whites except superficially. I could sense their uneasiness around the same white people I associated with and liked. It was a nightmare because I knew the Negro boys could sense that they were not accepted and part of this stemmed from the fact that they did not believe they were good enough to be accepted. I suppose that was one of the big differences between us. It became increasingly clear to me that I was not really colored either. I was some place in between. I was the product of two worlds, the black and the white, without belonging totally to either one. I found myself in that gray area which separates—no, which *joins*—the blacks and the whites in this country. It is there in that no-man's land, where the refuges are few and the suspicions seep in from both sides, where the encounters with men, black or white, render me a role which calls for a great deal of flexibility. This is where I dwell.

Although being marginal is risky and demanding and requires walking a social tightrope, it also has its advantages. It affords one the opportunity of objectively evaluating situations in which both races have failed to come to grips with the race problem. First of all, being marginal is a challenge. Meeting the onslaughts of some white people who have built up in their minds, because of their experiences—or lack of them—a stereotyped image of the Negro offers me amazing possibilities—as well as moments of genuine humor. White imaginations are sent reeling, white comprehension collapses in an effort to understand how a colored person could possess, let alone assimilate, the same sentiments, standards and mores which characterize white society. I cover my nakedness with Brooks Brothers suits and arm myself with the social amenities which characterize white society, but this does not mean that I have surrendered my identity or individuality that comes from being marginal. But the bewilderment experienced by some white people upon meeting me is also shared by some Negroes, and I have experienced rejection by Negroes, probably because I have assimilated too many of the white man's characteristics, of which they are greatly suspicious, and which have led to their tragic existence.

In a sense it would seem that I am trapped by my circumstances, not really accepted by either culture and incapable of breaking completely from either for fear of losing an important part of myself. This is the great failure of mankind; that he does not recognize his involvement with his fellow man, black or white. The question of seeking and discovering one's identity, of working out one's existence and salvation in such a sit-

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uation leads me to believe that it is precisely through assuming a marginal role that all people will be able to come to grips with, and solve, the racial question.

Being marginal means being an individual.

Out of a seemingly nebulous, confusing, unpredictable and frustrating role can come a certain peace of mind, a serenity of soul, and a very fresh and objective view of the racial situation in this country.

I can remember a tense situation that I witnessed in Chicago several summers ago while working on a construction job. The crew consisted of both Negro and white laborers, with all the supervisory positions being held by the white workmen. It was a clear case of discrimination, since many of the Negro workers were amply qualified to hold top positions. Since I was working only for the summer, I tried to get along with all the other workers. I had no idea of the hostile feelings that existed. It was extremely hot that particular Friday and everyone had quit work early to have a beer. We were drinking the beer right on the construction site, the groups nicely divided, when one of the Negroes suggested that we "beat the hell out of the white boys." I thought at first he was kidding but it turned out that he was serious. I was really surprised because although I identified myself with the colored men at the time, I certainly had no grudges against the whites. So there I was, where the marginal man usually finds himself, right in the middle of things. Fortunately, after some debate among the Negroes, it was decided that it was too hot to fight.

In the weeks that followed I once again saw and experienced the discrimination that the Negroes are subjected to. This type of discrimination fosters and justifies their rage and anger. They are trapped by their circumstances and the chances of escape to something better are very slim.

The significant task of the marginal man is to handle the huge current of fears, both imaginary and real, that are projected to him by both races. It boils down to the fear of not being accepted because one is different—either black or white, for it goes both ways.

One must be given the opportunity to be accepted and the Negro has rarely ever had that chance, but the white person has. I am sure today that, despite my education and way of life, there are doors closed to me because of my color and for no other reason. But facing one's fears means evaluating one's self in terms of one's beliefs and the purposes of one's life. This is what I as a marginal man have had to do to survive. This is what all of us must do if our society is to survive. This is what the Negro revolution is forcing the white world to do at this moment in history. This is why the Negro can be the salvation of the white man in this country, and save him from the fate of drowning in his own apathy. The purpose of this life means involvement with other human beings.

It is my contention that we should all become marginal men, marginal in the spiritual sense, by subverting our prejudices to our religious beliefs. To the white Catholic, let the word go out that being a Christian today means identification with the family of man, that it means involvement with the other members of the Mystical Body of Christ, that it means rediscovering one's spiritual identity in 1963 and for all time. If we hate that part of the Mystical Body of Christ which is colored, if we despise that part of the Mystical Body which is cast down, oppressed and tormented, then we are hating and despising ourselves and God as well.

The responsibility, then, lies within each one of us. The responsibility to become fuller members of the Mystical Body by loving more is upon us today in terms of the race question. For many of us the effort will be painful but if so, then it must be heroic. Whether we be clerics or laymen, the challenge to tear away the false attitudes, the bias, and the intolerance which enslave our hearts in regard to our Negro brethren must be met now. The challenge to become marginal is there for all of us in the sense that we must open ourselves more in order to let in the meaning and force of our faith that will project us into that no-man's-land where there is scant refuge and great suspicion, where love for one another may well cost us some friends, but will gain for us eternal salvation.

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Nancy Sullivan

The History of the World as Pictures

The poem about the history of the world
As pictures will be in pieces like the history
Of that world and like those pictures
Each separate upon a wall in separate places.
Lined up they may be the meaning of the world
Or they may be the only world with meaning.

NANCY SULLIVAN, *an assistant professor at Rhode Island College, has published poems and reviews in many magazines. Her sequence, THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD AS PICTURES, won Third Prize in the* RAMPARTS *Poetry Contest.*

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Prehistoric Cave Painting of a Bison

Perhaps it was being inside of something
That caused them to render it outside
By scrawling great beasts in screams
Of rust and black over the walls of the cave.
Perhaps it was the visitation of an idea,
An event so powerful
As to turn them into men.

The bison is taut inside the readiness
Of its fur. It has no dimensions
Because it is already huge. Miniature
Black men resembling the matches
No one yet knows about cast needles
At the beast that is large as Africa.
What it must have been like to scramble
In out of a rain to discover not only
The sensation of dryness, but a place
That had been visited by a god.

Design on a Greek Amphora: Apollo on a Winged Tripod (ca. 490 B.C.)

The very opposite of the cave with its bison
Because the design is on the outside here and the hollow inside,
But the terra cotta colors and the black vase
Loop it to that earlier gallery
As an arrow is fulfilled in its prey.

Apollo carries his arrows at his shoulder
As he sits plucking a lyre on the curved
Surface of the vase. He is in love.
Cupid has shot his heart with fire
For Daphne, a woodsy girl,

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That eternal camper, later his laurel.
Why should the god of music and poetry
Seek such a woman? Not to attain
Is the grasping of poetry and music its name.
Because a woman in her tree is better loved
Than bison or boar. Sing, Apollo,
From your tripod above the sturdy wings of Pegasus.

'I sing a woman into bed
Her hair my pillow
Her arms my cage.
I sing us married or dead
For as accounted by the sage
Love is endless when wed.
Now only the leaves reckon
Where my love has fled.'

Buddha Expounding the Doctrine to Yásas, the First Lay Member of the Buddhist Community (5th Century)

This too was painted on a rock,
On a pillar in a temple in India.
It pictures what the beginnings were like:
A man listening to his god in a garden of goodness.
The flowers are everywhere. What was Buddha
Offering to Yásas in that gouged-out hand?
Possibly a lotus. Surely not an apple.
Everything's serene. Two men talk.
Their voices mingle: Yásas in the white
Face and garment of the layman and Buddha,
Big and brown. It is happy.

The roundness of the pillar is the wholeness of the doctrine,
And the pillar itself like the detachment of holy men
Given to separate ways in the temples of their gods.

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A Triptych by Van Eyck (ca. 1430)

There are three sections and the middle one
Is larger than its sides. Christ is dead
In the center. It looks like this.

Left: Sprung late from his mother's womb,
John the Baptist in the ombres of a hair skin
Lopes the desert, the Neanderthal of saints,
Crying us all into water and the tomb.

Center: It is Christ risen in a shower of light
Stunning as gaiety. A banner whirled
Above a god with a man's skin. Everything is white
As if to strain the dirty reaches of the world
Into which he came. Observe the sight
Of a god risen on a lacquered board
Rushing headlong to his heaven to record
The sorrows of this place. Look to the right.

Right: How it stank in that tomb.
Inside the immaculate painting of that fierce nativity
The pigment people stare into the miracle, rags to noses.
Odor of Lazarus in the womb.

Spring in Chiang-nan by Wen Cheng-Ming (1547)

There is writing at the top, a criticism
Or perhaps a poem done in a calligraphy
More intricate than the branches on the trees,
And speaking more clearly than the singular boatsman
Brushed on to the long scroll with the skeleton of a feather.

Words and trees and one man in a boat.

The words, pictures themselves, explain what
The scene does not. I do not know what they mean,
But they must be a lesson telling things
That the old academician could not trust to the landscape.

It is spring in Chiang-nan. The trees tell it.
And a man, a stem in his half-moon of a boat,
Sits as though aware of the marvelous changes.
The picture is as still as the idea of China
Wrapped tight in the heavy kimono of its past.
But the colors are as soft as the beginnings of something.
The picture hangs long and narrow, as its theme does not.

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Las Meniñas by Velaquez (1656)

The dwarfs dominate, at least theatrically.
The little princess near the center, illuminated
In her petulant reluctance to pose for yet
Another portrait illustrates an idea of order,
Not the governing parents, the mother and the father,
Philip IV and Mariana of Austria, mere reflections
In the distant mirror in the far places of the paint.
The commissioned artist accepts a royal order
Although he alone governs this pigment territory
Where dwarfs rule and ugliness flowers to virtue.

We look into the picture to watch a situation,
Into a tall room in the Alcazar hung with copies of Rubens.
The Infanta Doña Margarita doesn't want to pose.
She is five years old and has had enough of paint.
But forces are at work here: the perspective
That holds the room together and holds the Rubens
On to the painted walls. There are triangles
Of people whose duties are enormous, eleven in all.
Velaquez must paint, the ladies-in-waiting,
Las meniñas, must cajole and pass some chocolate
To the princess. The king and queen must
Be that, but here without a single power.
The man going up the steps must go up them.
In the right hand corner, the dwarf Nicolasito
Is stepping on the dog. Another, Maribarbola,
Stares out of her massive face to tell a royal story.

Her brief finery is the somber opposite of little
Margarita's bright and golden style. She rules
No empire nor ever will, but here she dominates the mind.
Beauty, a dog, and this wizened female
So ugly, so sad, so sufficient to this scene
As to make you wonder at the governments of men.
How detached the painter's glance now that he has
Put everyone in his place and upset the candor of Spain.

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Portrait of Mrs. Siddons by Gainsborough (ca. 1785)

In a monumental hat above a swirl of blue clothes
The actress, Mrs. Siddons, assumes a rigid pose.
The furs drape to languor, but the woman is precise.
Once as his Lady, she thrust a bloody dagger through Macbeth's nice,
Reckless life to act to triumph the vanity of human wishes.
It sold out. Fame rose above the echo of kisses
Above the cheer of dapper London, and on to Gainsborough's brush.

She sits so in a damask chair in the hush
Of the bursting painting. Prime ministers might borrow
That face, Lord Nelson the nose. A conquered sorrow
In those black eyes is minimized by the close of the lips,
Unspeaking but full. No part of paint on part drips
Awkwardly. Surely through him her hair is her own.
A precise century dwindles and brings them to that.
Reason, reason, is this your lady's face or that her hat?

Le Gare Saint-Lazare by Claude Monet (1877)

It is the picture of a thing in a place,
Not an apple or a pear in a bowl,
But of a train resting in its station
Surrounded by mist, smoke, vapor, and paint.

A few people stare down an opposite track
To focus a train coming from some point
Outside the picture. The only train important
To them is the one that will take them somewhere.

But with Monet, his train is stationary
In the station, going nowhere but here
Into its mechanical cathedral. What a revolution
Is involved in the turning of those intricate wheels

Into art. The hush of the waiting is there
As well as the light dappled with soot
And the tracks bearing the monumental weight
Of transportation transfixed in the mist of Paris.

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NANCY SULLIVAN

Number I by Jackson Pollock (1948)

No name but a number.
Trickles and valleys of paint
Devise this maze
Into a game of Monopoly
Without any bank. Into
A linoleum on the floor
In a dream. Into
Murals inside of the mind.
No similes here. Nothing
But paint. Such purity
Taxes the poem that speaks
Still of something in a place
Or at a time.
How to realize his question
Let alone his answer?

Night Fishing at Antibes by Picasso (1939)

What is in it? First there is always that.
Two men spear fish by the light of abstract lanterns.
One has on a striped jersey, and with a four-pronged spear
Pierces a sole. At the right, near the sea wall,
Two girls stand watching. One has a bicycle
And is eating a double ice cream cone.
Or is it double? For what is single here?

How anxious that second fisherman
With his grey nose almost in the water.
His eye is in his nose.
The girl with the ice cream rests on her two fin feet.
One of the two fish has an eyebrow.
Inside the moon a spring spirals light down
Into the conventional waters. Lanterns
Are cut in corners. Two towers of the town
Surmount the rocky shore to the left;
At the bottom, a crab stares out.
Square are circles and vice versa.
How what is painted is the history here.
The design, the shape of this interlude,
Is its meaning decorated in the colors
Of a nocturne, in green, blue, purple, and light.
Brought to completion a month before World War again began,
The painting reminds me of why that war was ended:
So that men may fish and ladies dawdle
In the serene quiet of revolutionary places.

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BEING NO WRITER, never having planned a story, and this isn't a story, I mean it can't be because I learned at Bedford High that a story has an introduction, a beginning, a middle and an end, well being no writer, just a friend, I was and am a friend of my two friends, and they were friends of mine, I must, I feel I must, put down, being no writer, well this isn't a story. I would like to keep myself out of what is to follow, but I am, I was, I will be, I suppose, necessary to its. All right, to its.

I ask for patience, this isn't going to be, or it hasn't been, easy. But our names, for we must, to hold your attention, have each of us a name, our names are, yes, the present tense is the best, our names are: Rafe, Jake and Tony. I'm Tony. And not being a writer, I haven't the strength or imagination to address myself to no one in particular, I must address myself to someone, and I will call you Gloria. I don't know any Gloria, of course, but I must tell someone and it's easier to talk to a girl so it will be you, Gloria. I hope you are intelligent, Gloria, but if you aren't it doesn't matter too much, I am sure you are pretty.

To Gloria:

Now that I have dedicated my story, not exactly a story, more like an accident, to you, Gloria, I shall have to forget you, much as I would like to dream of you and watch your head under the light of the lamp the way . . .

Dear Rafe. I stared at his long thin body under the sheet, he was dead. Tony, his mother sobbed, it's awful for you. You loved him.

It's awful for you, ma'am, I said.

And Jake, she said, it's awful for Jake.

It's awful, I said.

Do you want to kiss him, she said.

Christ, I said.

I'll leave you alone with him, she said and she went away.

Rafe, I said uncertainly. Christ, I said, my vocabulary doesn't amount to much. Dead, I said, Rafe dead. A sickening sentiment came over me, I was ashamed, I bent my head. Rafe, I mumbled, good luck, man. Rafe, I said, as if to cheer him up, do you remember the good old days? Rafe, I said, the time we . . . the lake, the mountain, the horse, your bike, that girl, the cop, what the teacher said, the woods, the snow, the beer. Rafe! I must have hollered it.

Tony! Rafe's mother came in quickly. She took me by the arm and said, Never mind, never mind.

I began walking. I walked up Main and turned at Clinton, I crossed the tracks and recrossed the tracks and turned down Fulton and hesitated at

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Broad and retraced my steps and crossed Clinton and hit Main again and went down Old South to River that runs parallel to Jones, and circled the green twice. I turned off at Haddam and reached Oak where I crossed the street and turned up Elm. This brought me back to Main and I turned into Dover, only to run into Haddam again that fetched me up at Lincoln and Locust. I made a 360° turn and passed Hawley and Boston and High and Herkimer and turned right and took the first left which was Orchard. Turning left again, I made it to Seminole and Pequot and turned down Lincoln to Taft, crossing the street to Cleveland, and found myself at Brewster Place, a block from Main again with Bostwick on my left parallel to Woodside that ran into Riverview. I turned back and quickened my steps to reach Main and the tavern on the corner of High because I was thirsty.

I don't remember what time it was by the clock although there was a big clock over the bar and a grocer's colored calendar as well, I'll always regret not looking at either one. As a matter of fact, well, not so much fact as probably fancy, O'Brian, the bartender, had a face like a clock, blank and colorless except for his handle bars, if you know what I mean, his mustache looked like the hands of a clock which would make it quarter past nine or quarter of three, or when he smiled ten of or after but he didn't smile.

He placed the overflowing beer on the counter in front of me. One beer, he said and he swiped the counter but at the same time he moved his pale eyes to the right and his head too, discreet it was, and raised his eyebrows. Better take your friend home, he said as if he were asking the time of day. No one heard but me.

Rafe was pretty screwed as usual and was drinking whiskey straight. A row of empty glasses on the bar and a fistful of crumpled dollar bills laid out beside them were evidence enough that he had had too many and was having more.

Hyer Tony boy, he said, raising his head, and he slid over beside me.

Look, Rafe, I said, let's go.

Tony, he said, remember the gold ole days . . .

Sure, I said, let's go.

Where to, he said, where to.

You're drunk, I said. Rafe, you'll get in a fight. Look, I'm your friend, I'll take you home.

Home? His elbow slipped off the bar and his glass crashed on the floor. The serious-minded drinkers stared at the pieces of glass on the floor and a table of "nice" people from the other side of Crest Hill looked at each other.

Another whiskey, pal, said Rafe to the bartender, straight.

No, me lad, said the bartender, enough is enough.

It's paid for, said Rafe.

I don't want your money, said the bartender.

Please give me one more, said Rafe tenderly.

All right, said the bartender, on the house.

You're a gentleman, said Rafe.

But that's it, said the bartender, I don't want no trouble and I won't take your money. Tony, he said to me, take him home, get him out of here, I've got trouble enough.

Come on, Rafe, I said and I stood up.

No, said Rafe and he stuck out his lower lip like a kid, I don't want to.

The swinging doors opened and the Law came in, we all knew Mike.

Rafe, he said, how many times have I told you not to park your car so near the corner, last week . . .

Okay, Mike, said Rafe. He staggered to his feet.

Look, I'll go with you, I'll go with him, I said to Mike.

Rafe turned on me. You little fool, he said, perfectly sober. Stay where you are! and he walked out straight as a die.

ALL OF US IN THE BAR heard the crash. The serious drunks turned their heads like leaves on a tree and listened as if they weren't quite sure they had heard anything. The nice people said Oh! and stood up, a lady dropped her pocketbook and everything fell out. The bartender didn't seem to hear anything and went on polishing his counter, his face said quarter past nine and was reflected in the nice clean surface and read quarter of three.

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I ran out after what seemed like half an hour from shock and running toward me was Jake, his face flushed. It's Rafe, I said. I know it, he said.

Look, said Mike, you fellers can't do any good here now.

The usual crowd that always gathers like paid extras from the wings was already there, shopkeepers out of their shops, kids from the ball field, the butcher with blood on his apron, old Mrs. Jackson, deaf, her hand to her ear as if to catch the last words of the dying, maybe the death rattle, Jesus.

Jake and I watched them lift Rafe onto the stretcher.

Step aside, yelled Mike, make room there!

They lifted Rafe so tenderly, so gently, the dead Rafe, it was clear he was dead, his head was turned to one side, his blue eyes were wide open, his left arm hung limp over the side of the stretcher, his shoes were gone, someone picked them up, the laces were still tied neatly. His shirt was open and you could see the blond curly hair, but there wasn't any blood on him, only on the street there was a great splotch of it that spread slowly into a design of its own. Rafe just looked as if he had died at home in bed, he was very pale.

Old Doctor Morse elbowed his way through the crowd that stood doggedly, determined, silent.

Make way for the doctor, yelled Mike.

The doctor halted the two men with the stretcher and he placed his head easy and loving on Rafe's chest and wrapped his fingers around the limp wrist.

He straightened up. He's dead, he said. It was official.

The ambulance clanged away, the crowd stared after it.

Last week . . . said Mike.

Christ, look at his car, said Jake in a whisper. It looked as if a child had stomped on a toy. It had hit the pole so hard that it had bounced back twenty feet before it had time to disintegrate and fall, maybe like fireworks.

I found myself walking up the stairs to Rafe's room preceded by his mother. Her voice seemed to come from out in the hall although she stood beside me, her hand on my arm.

I'll leave you alone with him, she said.

Rafe! I must have hollered it.

Never mind, never mind, said Rafe's mother, never mind, never mind, said Rafe's mother, never mind.

Jake and I were (are) closer than before, all of us are (were) friends, close friends, but Jake and I are real close friends now and we don't talk about Rafe. I suppose in a way we are accessories to his violent death because we don't mention his name anymore, it is too painful, and even the good old days don't include Rafe, I feel as if we had murdered him in the woods.

Jake: Remember when you and I, Tony, went up Crest Hill that day and you . . . and I . . .

It was as if I gave Rafe a push over the side of the mountain and I saw his body end over ending it into the mist below.

Sure, I said, sure, the two of us . . .

Come to my place tonight, said Jake, and have a beer.

Sure — sure.

I MADE a 360° turn and passed Hawley and Boston and High and Herkimer and turned right and took the first left which was Orchard. Turning left again, I made it to Seminole and then Pequot and turned down Lincoln to Taft, crossing the street to Cleveland, and found myself at Brewster Place, a block from Main again with Bostwick on my left parallel to Woodside that ran into Riverview. I turned off at Haddam and pretty soon reached Oak where I crossed the street at an angle and turned up Elm. This brought me back to Main, brought me back to Main, brought me back to Main and I turned into Dover, Dover, only to run into Haddam again that fetched me up at Lincoln and Locust. That's where I made the 360° turn and passed Hawley and Boston and High and Herkimer, passed Hawley and Boston and High and Herkimer, and turned right and took the first left which was Orchard. I turned right and retraced my steps and there I was with Boston across the street and Herkimer again to my right, and I turned down Herkimer but it was getting dark

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on the side streets so I circled back toward Main and it began to rain, just a drizzle. Then it was light again, early I think, but it got later and I, it was about noon, turned sharp at Boston and went up High, I turned at Boston and went up High.

Jake's motorcycle, all decked out like a Christmas tree, all the extras, appeared at the end of Herkimer coming toward me. The throttle was wide open and it sounded like a battle. He brought the contraption to a stop beside me and let down his legs, braking it still more with his big feet.

Hyer Tony.

Hyer Jake.

Come on over to my place tonight and have a beer.

Sure . . . sure.

Jake gave the motorcycle the gun and executed a U-turn full speed, the motorcycle seemed to slide almost on its side in a big half circle and then it leapt in the air and it hit the big dignified truck that was like a stonewall on the move. The motorcycle, all lit up like a Christmas tree, went right up the hood of the truck and crashed into the windshield. The noise was awful but short, quick, like a .38 through a glass window. The truck driver let himself fall out the side door in that split second and jumped to his feet. The steam from the busted radiator enveloped the whole business, like a cloud, and for a minute I didn't see any more, just Jake end over ending it into the mist below.

The same stubborn crowd of onlookers was there right away, from the wings, maybe a dollar they got, the professional starers, the butcher with the bloody apron, a cleaver in his hand, the kids from the ball park, an old woman with a shopping bag, the jeweler with a loupe in his eye, some nice people, Don't look, they said. Mike: Make room for the doctor; the sirens, the ambulance. Jake bloody, distorted, broken, dead.

Old Doc stood up. He's dead, he said.

What's the matter, son, said my mother.

Jake's dead, I said, corner of Herkimer and Boston.

What?

Leave me alone, I said.

Tony, said my mother, Jake wants you on the telephone.

Hyer Tony. Come on over and have a beer, but I didn't go, I just hung up. Wrong number, I said.

I just jogged down High and padded up Boston, crossed the street at Locust and circled to Main. When I least wanted to, I mean I didn't want to see him at all, I'd run into Jake. He was making good money at the used car lot and he bought a second-hand motorcycle and every week on pay day he bought some new gadget for it til it looked like a Christmas tree. But Jake was changed, I can't explain it except he kind of gave me the creeps, he was only nineteen and there was grey in his hair already, and he limped as if he'd skinned a knee and I hadn't noticed before, there was a purple scar down the side of his face; funny that grey on the temples like an actor and he didn't move like a kid, sort of hesitation in his gait, and he began to look both ways before he crossed the street. But when he took out his motorcycle he was wild as ever, great, good old Jake, crazy, he opened the throttle wide and gave her the gun and it was like a battle.

But I noticed his hands shook and he seemed to avoid my eyes, I mean he was shifty like, not frank anymore, as if maybe, well, he even smelled funny as if he led a secret life somewhere, some other place that smelled different, I thought maybe he had a girl, slept with her.

Two beers, said O'Brian, and he slid them over to us. He swiped at the counter but his pale eyes were on Jake's shaky hands. Quarter past nine again, quarter of three.

You kids have had enough, said O'Brian.

I'm no kid, said Jake, I've been around.

Have it your way, said O'Brian.

Let's go, I said.

The set faces of the serious drinkers turned edgeways like leaves at a change of wind and the nice people got up, a lady dropped her pocketbook and said Oh! and the swinging doors opened and Rafe came in.

THE CRASH WAS MUFFLED like inside a building or under water. I heard Mike say, How many times, Rafe, I got to tell you . . .

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Rafe wanted to go up the mountain, it wasn't really a mountain, Rafe called it a mountain, it was just Crest Hill. Rafe sprinted on ahead up the little old path littered with orange peels and bits of paper and dots of shiny mica and shells the birds left, and maybe a coke bottle. He was eager, young and so Jesus pretty like a girl, not really like a girl, manly, but, well like a girl, spiritual I guess I mean.

The three of us ate our cold cheeseburgers on top up there on Crest Hill and drank our warm cokes. Rafe stood up and looked down over the town, the lights were coming on, it looked the same as usual.

Isn't it beautiful, he said.

Aw, said Jake.

Sure, I said.

It's like . . . he said, it's like . . . if I was down there, fellas, on the corner of Main and River, looking up here, I'd say it's like . . . Jake and I waited in embarrassed silence for Rafe to find his . . . image, I guess it's called.

The first stars came out over head. Rafe looked up, Don't you see what I mean? he said.

Yeah, we said but I don't know if we did. Rafe was a poet, he had a future, we, I suppose, cherished him if we had only known it. I really loved him, that's why I don't understand why, as he stood on the edge of Crest Hill, I wanted to shove him over. I *saw myself* shove him over and he didn't say anything and he end over ended it and disappeared in the mist below.

Come on, said Jake, I got my lousy homework to do.

Look out! I said to Rafe, and I caught his arm, he had stumbled, it was getting dark. You want to get *hurt?* I said, and I guided him down the path all the way down. Jake was quiet except he jingled the money he was earning in the pocket of his jeans. I'm going to get me a motorcycle, he said, some day.

Rafe began drinking.

Jake worked hard, the money in the shoe box was piling up for that blessed motorcycle.

I'm keeping myself out of this.

Remember the good old days . . . said Rafe.

Take him home, said O'Brian.

Remember the mountain, he said, and how the sky looked like the town and the town like the sky?

Let's go, I said to Rafe.

It's Rafe, said Jake, his face flushed as if he were ashamed, he was running toward me.

I know it, I said.

He's dead, said the doctor.

I walked down Main and crossed over at Riverview that runs parallel to Jones and I turned up Cleveland and down Taft. I crossed and recrossed the tracks and circled the green and, and the motorcycle, all decked out like a Christmas tree, leapt in the air and pieces of it fell, maybe like fireworks, into the cornfield.

I started down Old South at a run but then I slowed down, keeping in step with myself, climbing up the stairs to Rafe's room. He lived on the corner of Clinton and Main and so I had to listen hard but I could tell it was me all right climbing up the stairs to Rafe's room behind his mother, and she said, You can only stay a minute, and I said, Is it measles? and she said, No, it isn't measles, I wouldn't let you come if it was measles, and I said, I've had measles, and she said, well, it isn't measles, and I said, How long's he got to stay in bed, and Rafe's mother said, Maybe a week, in this nice weather it's too bad, and I said, Jeezitis.

I said, Hyer Rafe, and he didn't say anything, he looked just like he was lying in bed at home, his head turned to one side and his blue eyes wide open and his arm over the side of the stretcher, and I turned down Hawley to Boston and then High and took the first left which was Orchard, and I crossed to Main and I saw Rafe's car parked too near the corner, and Rafe's mother said, You want to kiss him, and I said, Christ, and she said, I'll leave you alone with him for a minute, and I said, No, and Rafe's mother said, Never mind, Tony, never mind, and I put up my hands not to see the motorcycle climb straight up the front of the truck that was moving slow and dignified like a stonewall, but I heard the crash, it was awful.

Mom said, Answer the telephone, and I said, Tell Jake I'm not here, will you please, Mom, and she looked at me in a funny way and said, Tony, it's just Gloria again.

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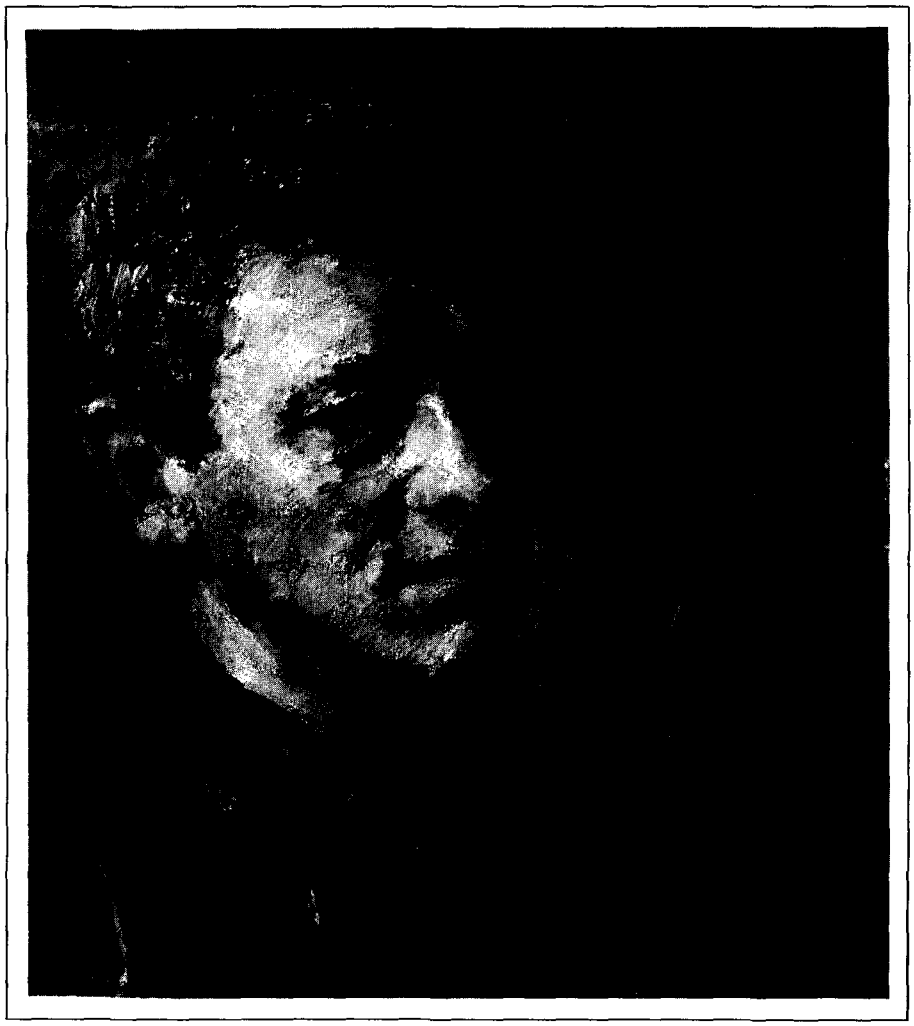
ANDREW WYETH



Painting by Henriette Wyeth

by Paul Horgan

HE HAS THE POWER *to enter and to become what he sees and paints. It is a power bequeathed to him by his childhood, a power common to most children, but one lost away from them when they take that long change toward the physical and material life of adults. It is the power not so much to recognize what is there to be seen, but even while gazing at it to imagine it as if it had never before existed: a power without end to rediscover life consciously.*

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When I first met Andrew Wyeth he was in all significant ways a citizen of a special world – one which he had made.

It was then a world of painted cardboard castles and armies fashioned from lead; for he was about twelve years old. I had come to pay a long summer visit to his sister Henriette and her husband, Peter Hurd, my schoolmate, both my lifelong intimates, both superb painters, who grew to their artistic independence as Andrew did in his turn, under the strenuous generosity of spirit of N. C. Wyeth, the father.

A world, then, for Andy, in that summer of 1930, of drawing-books filled by pencilled creatures of his own who ranged from Norman knights to Robin Hood and to the musketeers of Louis XIII. I remember in Andy's basement playroom a generative jumble of cutlasses with tarnished brass guards, and crossbows, and a white and gold toy theatre with a red muslin stage curtain and two or three tiers of boxes on each side, and sets of scenery painted out of water colors eaten shallow in their pans by creative ardors, and sticky jars of gold and silver paint. In painted gesture and troll-like impersonations, Andrew came to visible conclusions about the secrets of the adult world which at that time added up to laughter boiling in his belly, as if that were the seat of Puck's visions, the source of energy for a world.

It was a world nourished by an imagination more active awake than in dream, and what I saw of it in his basement playroom was the grand clutter of his whole childhood. I was promptly enlisted to contribute to the last phase of that miniature world, in which realities were given early testings and projections. While Andy drew, painted and cut out stage characters and pieces of scenery, he set me to work making a drawn and painted company of courtiers – for it was an eighteenth century theatre – to sit in the boxes, showing their cutout profiles under powdered headdresses. There were stout old duchesses and slim princesses in armchairs and officers in uniform with epaulettes and decorations and gentlemen in waiting standing behind.

The work was intensely executed. Another place and its time and creatures were brought into being. The making was all. When we were finished, and everyone was called from upstairs to see the results, the world was there for them to see, it looked as we meant it to, a glance was enough to

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show ardent references to imagined life, and then there was nothing to do with it. Everybody went back upstairs to weightier concerns. The toy theatre, its actors and boxholders, had been given the pathetic substance of a vision completed, and would thereafter rest on their raw platform at the end of the basement playroom undisturbed as a reference to those hours of hot-cheeked labor which had brought them forth.

But a process had been rehearsed. It was one which all children at creative play would have felt the same about. A difference here was that that fixity of vision in Andrew Wyeth during the time of his turning youth never afterward lost itself in the growing concerns of life which almost always diffused the imagination of other children until it must vanish. For Andrew, the acts of life as he learned them growing up meant a hotter and brighter, an always more intensely and exquisitely controlled focus of his imagination until the vision which entered into him from the world beyond himself required him to retain it forever in acts of art, by which he might communicate his world to others.

To do this worthily, he must give himself altogether to mastering the skill of his craft; and he must penetrate as a hierophant into that most fruitful of mysteries — the mystery contained within the all-familiar and commonly recognized external appearance of things.

The twentieth century has seen the growth of a terrible, and quite possibly false, authority concerning complexities. Knowledge — fragmented and fractionalized through the hourly discoveries of science, with these in turn compounded by an always changing and thus insecure theory of human psychology — knowledge in its modern dress has made the invisible, the theoretical, the abstract, seem more "contemporary" than the ancient desire of the artist to free universal meanings out of those likenesses of life which all men encounter in the same way — the way of seeing *what is there*. To burn the further truth out of the self-protective commonality of the objective world has been in this century the most difficult of aesthetic problems.

But nothing else, to this artist, has seemed worth solving, however swiftly and reassuringly others, within the given limitations of their vision and their skill, have found release and acceptance through fashionable self-expression of other sorts.

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THUS, in one dimension, the father to the man.

In another, the child has fathered a number of wonderful survivals of personal characteristics. His gaze has always been a source as well as a receiver of light. To see is to know, and to know is to be amazed, and to be amazed is to fall in love with what is known, which must then be told. In their optic power his eyes must be extraordinarily keen, judging from the evidence of detail in his subjects seen at great distance. Bearing the closest scrutiny in which blades of grass and veins of feathers and the like stand separately visible, his pictures when viewed from a way off combine details in integrated form just as their counterparts do in life.

So much for the science of how he sees. How he feels is clear enough in the infinite respect with which he approaches the humblest facts; and once again the end is love. It is this which people encounter when they look at his work, though quite possibly they might call it something else, as they marvel at his skill in showing them what they have always seen but have never known so well.

His eyes are a far blue-grey, with heavily modelled lids slanting sharply across them to the outer corners. Beneath them are small lateral rolls of cheek which, from long, serious squinting at the world, have enlarged since childhood. But they were always there, and now, as they did then, they express a rich fullness of glee when he smiles or laughs, almost shutting his eyes altogether.

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CHRISTMAS 1963

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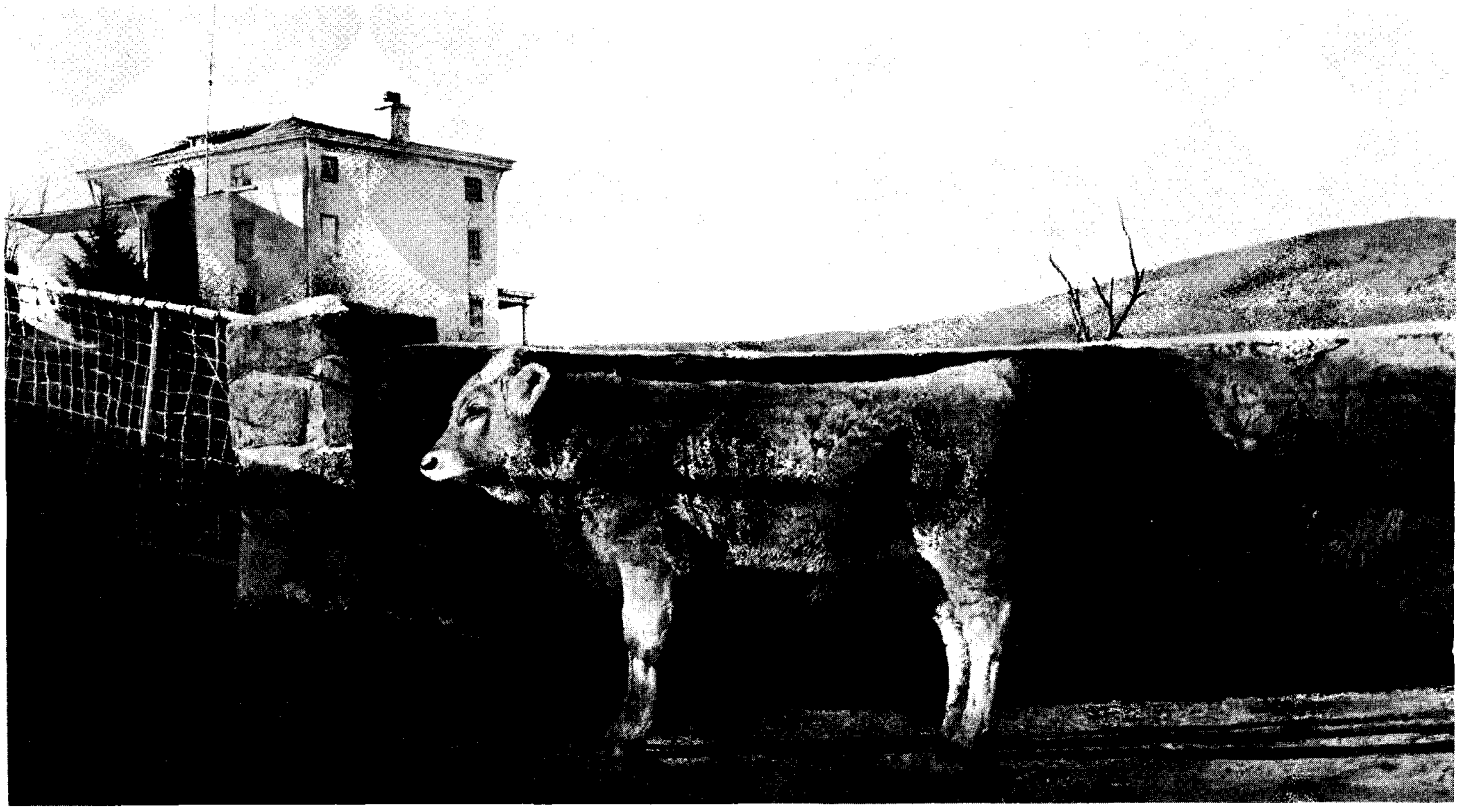

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There is much laughter in him, and his whole face and figure enter into it when it takes him. Like his father he is a large man, somewhat awkward in movement, making elbows, and giving out spread paws, and hunching his big shoulders, to communicate his humor. As a child he was outrageously precocious in bawdy preceptions and announcements, with which he used to startle the large company that always sat down at the family table. I can remember Pa Wyeth making a round-eyed, round-mouthed open face, and then exploding in laughter at the head of the table when Andy let go with something particularly original in the way of gleeful impropriety. Andy was the sprite of the family. His energies were all then directed toward romance and fun, even while he was kept hard at work in his father's studio learning to draw.

His precocity in draughtsmanship was notable, and though I was not there to see it happen, I saw results in his drawings when he grew out of playroom ideas into an awareness of natural life. The long, low-domed swellings of the hills of Chadds Ford; the mild, now secret, now open meander of the Brandywine; the pitted and time-eaten white stone houses and barns and walls of Pennsylvania; the golden brush of winter and hanging in green shadowy air the apples of late summer as scarlet as the red coats of British soldiers who had once marched and fought in the valley; the intent, wary, skittering life of small creatures among leaves and bushes and grasses; the arc from sky to earth and back again of birds making a captive out of the watcher's eye that must follow the invisible path of flight until it be lost in white effacing distance; men and women, the humble vessels of all that he saw about him in the conditions of nature — all these entered into him and meant more by the day, as his skill as a craftsman grew. Seeing his progression from playful fantasy in drawing and painting, to atmospheric paintings of real places, to the discovery of people, you had a sense that as his power of sight and skill of hand grew steadily into their marvelous mastery of technique, so his power of heart grew to fill that technique with emotion worthy of it.

In other words, a playful view of the world turned like some painful but welcome act of growth into a tragic view embracing all that lived and must one day vanish. In such a view all that was transitory must assume special dearness and must reveal meaningful beauty. If man discovers that his lot

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is tragic, he conquers it simply by admitting that this is so. All polarities of feeling become analagous to the change of seasons, the falling away of life, and the return of life, every act and every facet of which when truly seen become forever respectable and precious. To see these truly became Andrew Wyeth's passion, with results which the world now knows and values splendidly.

LEAVING HIS WORKS, then, to speak for themselves, I will pursue in a few more words a sketch of his likeness, with hints of his personality and presence, as I know them.

His face has a tawny pallor, and it bears the marks of two kinds of suffering. One is that which comes through sensibility — the burden of really entering into objective experience, whether in the lives of wife and sons and other family, or friends, or the general humanity, or the likeness of the inanimate world — a burden for which the artist bears a special responsibility. If the life-leathered hand of an old Negro, contracted like a bird's scaly claw, contains evidence of his whole history, and if the artist must draw this hand with much respect and love to make its immense significance plain to others, then the artist is not merely recording what he sees: he is responsibly lifting for all to see the weight of a whole human being. Such effort leaves its mark in the eyes, the mouth, the tender runnels of the brow where so many rehearsals of troubling thought have left their mark upon this artist.

The other kind of suffering was physical — Andrew passed through a long, tormenting, and very nearly fatal illness some years ago. Not the least of the sufferings here engaged must have been those of thinking to take leave of the beautiful wife who has been magnificently the guardian of the terms of life needed for his art, and to part from his two sons. He recovered — but he brought back to life with him something of the aura of the reprieved man, and time more than ever became precious, and the world ever more desirable, where it abided waiting for him to celebrate what he saw of it and loved.

Withal, away from work, he has kept from long ago the blithe merriment which breaks forth from him when he is with his family or with close friends. They share his glee, as they share his excitement when he has something amazing to tell about. Then his voice goes intense and breathy, it lifts in pitch as it softens in volume, his eyes flood a little

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with emotion, he hunches his shoulders, his big white front teeth like a boy's glisten, his hands fan out to press forward the thing that possesses him, and this might be a droll trifle, or a great sad wonderful event, or a place, or a creature entire. In his moments of enthusiasm, he spends himself fully, just as he does in each small separate episode of drawing a line or creating a texture out of color, touch by touch.

Memory of times long past, suspended in the haze of history, animates him as much as life seen today. For example, one of his great familiars in the Brandywine Valley is General George Washington, of whom he speaks as though the General had ridden off only this morning into the landscape of his simple glory. I think this neighborly sense of General Washington came alive in Andrew's boyhood when his father painted a remarkable picture out of a dream.

Pa Wyeth, it seemed, dreamed one night that as he was out painting in the country near the Brandywine, Washington came riding on a white horse and stopped and spoke to him. I heard Pa tell about this and I saw the painting — it was a large painting, done in Pa's most simple and romantic style. It showed Pa standing with his back toward us, surrounded by his working paraphernalia, and there beyond Pa and facing him — and us — was the General on his white horse, with his leg cocked up as he leaned down to talk to his friend. Behind all this reached and rolled the valley landscape. There was a large appealing innocence in the encounter on the big square canvas. It seemed to say that Washington belonged in just this way to the painter, and that if he happened by in a dream, there was a communicable reality in the circumstances of the man's biography and of the place and of the living mind which had connected the two. So it was that all the circumstantiating details of the painting — houses we could all recognize, a road, a bridge, the river, certain famous trees, the very light of the Brandywine Valley which was a sort of pure diffused silver like the stuff of unformed cloud — made the central unreality of the apparition of the General into a charming workaday fact. I think I have felt closer myself to Washington ever since knowing that picture; and it quite probably triggered Andrew's response to him, which now, in the fullness of his maturity and the highest reach of his powers as a master, has taken on a certain command of historical information which is impressive.

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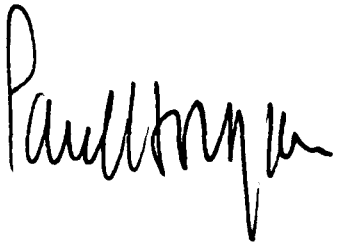
For Andrew has examined with loving thoroughness all the ground of the battle of the Brandywine, which was fought in the Revolutionary War between the British under Lord Howe and Lord Cornwallis and General Knyphausen on one side and the American Continentals under General Washington on the other. It was one of Washington's defeats. Andrew owns a stone mill building of the period of the war, and he knows just where certain troops crossed the river beyond his mill, and where they went. He sees how the columns of troops used the long hillsides, and where the roads in the hill-folds took them. The tourist monuments of the houses where Washington held his headquarters are washed of their commercial claptrap when he speaks of them. The wide yellow field — he showed it to me in autumn — where the last phase of the battle took place rests empty and at peace until Andrew, with his voice going light and intense, describes the battle; and then you know the cannonades from cast-iron ordnance bucking on their muddy carriages, and you see the color of the red coats like scattered berries, and the ragged white and blue of the other side, amidst long, sorrowful draws of moving air made visible by pungent gunpowder smoke. When the battle is over, with the retreat and the escape made good, you have a sense of experience. General Washington rides off out of sight toward Chester, looking for a small stone house with low-ceilinged rooms where he can sup by firelight and spend a short night, and Andrew can show you where it was, and how it was, until you truly see it, with love.

AND, *whatever his subject, this, too in a perfection of taste, skill, and feeling, is what he does for us in all his work.*



PAUL HORGAN, *Pulitzer Prize-winning regional writer, is the author of* Great River *and* Humble Powers.

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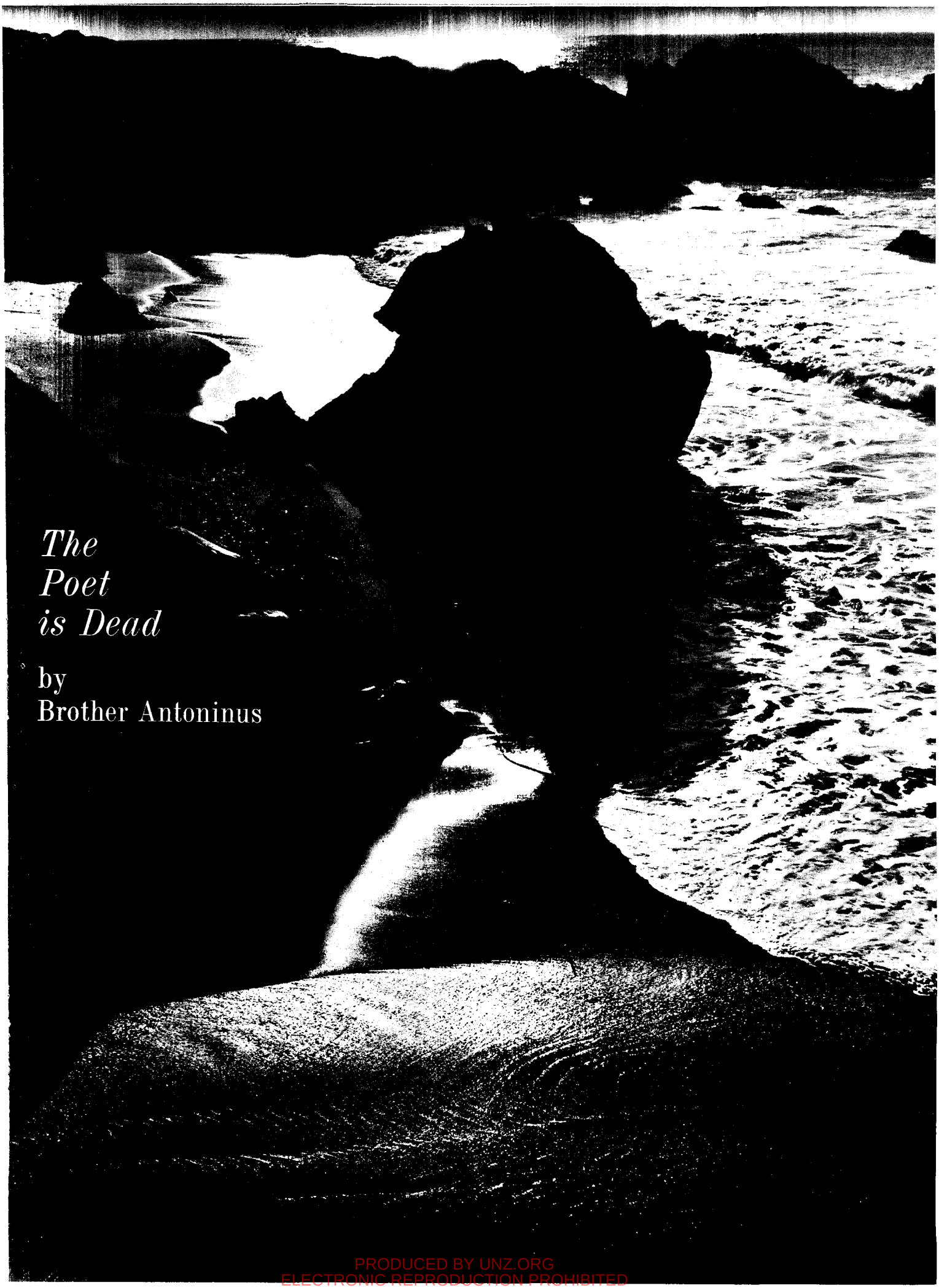

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A Memorial for Robinson Jeffers, to be read with a full stop between the strophes, as in a dirge.

IN THE EVENING THE DUSK
Stipples with lights. The long shore
Gathers darkness in on itself
And goes cold. From the lap of silence
All the tide-crest's pivotal immensity
Lifts into the land.

*

The great tongue is dried.
The teeth that bit to the bitterness
Are sheathed in truth.

*

For the poet is dead.
The pen, splintered on the sheer
Excesses of vision, unfingered, falls.
The heart-crookt hand, cold as a stone,
Lets it go down.

*

If you listen
You can hear the field mice
Kick little spurts in the grasses.
You can hear
Time take back its own.

*

For the poet is dead.
On the bed by the window,
Where dislike and desire
Killed each other in the crystalline interest,
What remains alone lets go of its light. It has found
Finalness. It has touched what it craved: the passionate
Darks of deliverance.

*

At sundown the sea wind,
Burgeoning,
Bled the west empty.

*

Now the opulent
Treacherous woman called Life
Forsakes her claim. Blond and a harlot
She once drank joy from his narrow loins.
She broke his virtue in her knees.

*

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In the water-gnawn coves of Point Lobos
The white-faced sea otters
Fold their paws on their velvet breasts
And list waveward.

*

But he healed his pain on the wisdom of stone,
He touched roots for his peace.

*

The old ocean boils its wrack.
It steeps its lees.

*

For the poet is dead. The gaunt wolf
Crawled out to the edge and died snapping.
He said he would. The wolf
Who lost his mate. He said he would carry the wound,
The blood-wound of life, to the broken edge
And die grinning.

*

Over the salt marsh the killdeer,
Unrestrainable,
Cry fear against moon set.

*

And all the hardly suspected
Latencies of disintegration
Inch forward. The skin
Flakes loss. On the death-gripped feet
The toenails glint like eyeteeth
From the pinched flesh.
The caged ribs and the bladed shoulders,
Ancient slopes of containment,
Imperceptibly define the shelves of structure,
Faced like rock ridges
Boned out of mountains, absently revealed
With the going of the snow.

*

In the sleeve of darkness the gopher
Tunnels the sod for short grass
And pockets his fill.

*

And the great phallus shrinks in the groin,
The seed in the scrotum
Chills.

*

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When the dawn comes in again,
Thoughtlessly,
The sea birds will mew by the window.

*

For the poet is dead. Beyond the courtyard
The ocean at full tide hunches its bulk.
Groping among the out-thrusts of granite
It moans and whimpers. In the phosphorescent
Restlessness it chunks deceptively,
Wagging its torn appendages, dipping and rinsing
Its ripped sea rags, its strip-weeded kelp.
The old mother grieves her deathling.
She trundles the dark for her lost child.
She hunts her son.

*

On the top of the tower
The hawk will not perch tomorrow.

*

But in the gorged rivermouth
Already the steelhead fight for entry.
They feel fresh water
Sting through the sieves of their salt-coarsened gills.
They shudder and thrust.

*

So the sea broods. And the aged gull,
Asleep on the water, too stiff to feed,
Spins in a side-rip crossing the surf
And drags down.

*

This mouth is shut. I say
The mouth is clamped cold.
I tell you this tongue is dried.

*

But the skull, the skull,
The perfect sculpture of bone! –
Around the forehead the fine hair,
Composed to the severest
Lineaments of thought,
Is moulded on peace.

*

And the strongly wrought features,
That keep in the soul's serenest achievement
The spirit's virtue,

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Set the death mask of all mortality,
The impress of that grace.

*

In the shoal-champed breakers
One wing of the gull
Tilts like a fin through the ribbon of spume
And knifes under.

*

And all about there the vastness of night
Affirms its sovereignty. There's not a cliff
Of the coastline, not a reef
Of the waterways, from the sword-thrust Aleutians
To the scorpion-tailed stinger Cape Horn –
All that staggering declivity
Grasped in the visionary mind and established –
But is sunken under the dark ordainment,
Like a sleeper possessed, like a man
Gone under, like a powerful swimmer
Plunged in a womb-death washed out to sea
And worked back ashore.

*

The gull's eye,
Skinned to the wave, retains the ocean's
Imponderable compression,
And burns yellow.

*

The poet is dead. I tell you
The nostrils are narrowed. I say again and again
The strong tongue is broken.

*

But the owl
Quirks in the cypresses, and you hear
What he says. He is calling for something.
He tucks his head for his mate's
Immemorial whisper. In her answering voice
He tastes the grace-note of his reprieve.

*

If there is fog in the canyons
The redwoods will know what it means.
The giant sisters
Gather it into their merciful arms
And stroke silence.

*

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When you smell pine resin laced in the salt
You know the dawn wind has veered.

*

And on the shelf in the gloom,
Blended together, the tall books emerge,
All of a piece. Transparent as membranes
The thin leaves of paper hug their dark thoughts.
They know what he said.

*

The sea, reaching for life,
Spits up the gull. He falls spread-eagled,
The streaked wings swept on the sand.
When the blind head snaps
The beak krakes at the sky.

*

Now the night closes.
All the dark's negatory
Decentralization
Quivers toward dawn.

*

He has gone into death like a stone thrown in the sea.

*

And in far places the morning
Shrills its episodes of triviality and vice
And one man's passing. Could the ears
That hardly listened in life
Care much less now?

*

The great tongue
Dries in the mouth. I told you.
The voiceless throat
Cools silence. And the sea-granite eyes.
Washed in the sibilant waters
The stretched lips kiss peace.

*

The poet is dead.

*

Nor will ever again hear the sea lions
Grunt in the kelp at Point Lobos.
Nor look to the south when the grunion
Run the Pacific, and the plunging
Shearwaters, insatiable,
Stun themselves in the sea.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Puzzles and Epiphanies. By Frank Kermode. New York: Chilmark Press. 234 pp. $4.95.

TO REVIEW a volume of collected reviews, some of which are, in turn, reviews of works of literary criticism, may seem like the ultimate in telemachy – the art, as Homer delicately hints, of fighting at a distance. But this collection of Frank Kermode's essays and reviews, written for various British and American magazines between 1958 and 1961, has a consistency which makes it add up to a provocative statement of literary principles rather than a random set of essays. It is thus doubly welcome. The reader can now consider a substantial portion of this stimulating critic's work, and can begin to understand what basic theories of literature determine his critical judgments.

I should classify him roughly as a Symbolist; he values a book in so far as it is "an intimation of otherness," a phrase which he quotes approvingly from David Jones. He looks for a meaning dependent on but larger than the book itself, and his method is to tie an individual writer – Allen Tate or the Prince di Lampedusa, Evelyn Waugh or Graham Greene – into a larger debate of which that writer's work can be seen as a part. All puzzles, he feels, should lead to epiphanies, that is, to revelations of a pattern and order imposed on a book by its author but corresponding to an external and universal – Kermode does not quite say divine – order. Speaking of Joyce, who emerges as a close spiritual ancestor, he comments on "his desire to make of a book . . . a reality which, like normal reality, is a paradigm of some inaccessible truth," and he seems to agree with the Joyce critics' "underlying assumption . . . that the books . . . are *fully* meaningful."

To Kermode the work of art should be a revelation of order, and the critic's task is to assist in bringing this revelation about by discovering the system of philosophic equivalents to which the book relates. It will be seen at once that this is a far cry from New Criticism, with its close attention to the text, or to Aristotelian and other forms of structural criticism, in which the critic limits himself to a purely literary inquiry. Kermode's work is, in fact, closer to exegesis than what is currently considered criticism, and like Joyce he ultimately owes much of his method to the allegorical Biblical exegetes of the Middle Ages. Literature is treated almost entirely as a comment on life, as a revelation which needs to be further explained. The danger of this approach is that it can often lead to a debate at a level which leaves the work of art far below, hidden and forgotten. The book under discussion becomes merely a launching-pad for a metaphysical revery.

But Kermode is far too careful a critic to allow his method to fail him in this way very often, and at his best he is often remarkably illuminating. Thus his comments on the revised version of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* explore the novelist's preoccupations and fit the theme of the book into the Augustinian context of the earthly and heavenly cities. The essay suggests just how the image of order which Waugh professes to find in the hierarchic forms of British society is used as a kind of earthly reflection of the City of God, and Waugh's favorite locale, the stately British country house, becomes the symbol of that City. Kermode is very persuasive on this point. His arguments absolve Waugh of the charge of mere snobbishness which has so often been raised against him, and by referring to the biography of Campion and some of the other writings, the critic is able to suggest the orthodoxy – and honesty – on which the novelist's vision is based.

A rather similar inquiry into the theories underlying E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* explores the probable relationship between that novel and the excited interest in clarity, civility, and order which characterized Cambridge University in the Edwardian era. The Cambridge philosophers – Russell, G. E. Moore, and Yeats' "profound McTaggart" – are studied as literary influences, especially Moore's *Principia Ethica*, which "treated personal relationships as if they were subject to the same conditions as works of art" and argued that "the fundamental principle of organic

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unity derives from aesthetics." Kermode is able to argue for the presence of these ideas in Forster's novel, and the learning and restraint with which he argues only makes his case more convincing.

Almost all of the essays in the book deal with modern writers, and two thirds of them deal with modern novelists: Henry Miller, C. P. Snow, William Golding, Vladimir Nabokov, J. D. Salinger, Christopher Isherwood, Angus Wilson, Anthony Powell, Robert Musil, Boris Pasternak. Given Kermode's predilection for writers with a firm commitment to a philosophical system, and the ability to make that system intelligible in a work of fiction, most readers can probably decide his preferences and dislikes for themselves. It is not surprising to find that he gives high marks to William Golding, who "has embodied in his own myths the truths that inform all others," or that he is pleased at the relevance of the Church's teaching on Heroic Virtue to Graham Greene's *A Burnt-out Case*. Nor is it surprising to find low marks awarded to J. D. Salinger, too obviously "designed for the smart-common reader," but only pretending to a serious meaning.

Kermode's insistence on a link between a work of literature and what he calls "assertive thinking," can, of course, lead to occasional failures of taste. Thus he is led to prefer C. P. Snow to Samuel Beckett on the grounds that Snow "says more to us" because his characters belong in the intelligible world. This is really an evasion of the differences between these two authors, and of the distinctive powers which they both possess. Nor does the charge that Robert Musil wasted great gifts to produce a mere "metaphysician's miscellany" in *The Man Without Qualities* really come to grips with the structural problems of that fascinating book. Many modern poets and novelists have found that the chaos of the modern world can only be rendered by an apparently chaotic style, often difficult or obscure. An aesthetic theory that considers this merely as a "fallacy"—as Kermode does, agreeing with Yvor Winters—cannot deal adequately with certain areas of modern literature.

The author's specific critical attitudes emerge clearly enough in his discussion of modern novels, but they are perhaps even clearer in his comments about other critics. In these it is possible to discern the outline of an ideal critic, fully equipped to deal with modern literature. He will be widely read in philosophy, of course. He will have Edmund Wilson's gift of summary, and his ability to consider uncongenial works patiently and fairly. He will not limit himself to a mere narrow consideration of the book at hand, but will prepare himself for each task by familiarizing himself with whatever else an author has written, and thus will discover his literary and his non-literary allegiances. He will be able to keep his balance, to follow Mario Praz in remaining "aloof without being merely clinical." He will avoid idle speculation and prognosis. And he will not fall into the errors of Northrop Frye, who is charged with treating literature too objectively, too exclusively, and being too eager to assert "the discontinuity of literature from assertive thinking."

It is a pretty stiff order, but Kermode almost fulfills it himself in a number of these essays. When he is able to rise above the limitations he has imposed on himself—when he does not stop with the translation of a book into larger philosophical terms, or with a complaint that such a translation cannot easily be made—he is a superb critic. The long essay which begins the volume is perhaps the best justification of his method, and it is a masterpiece of explanation, and of exploration. It is an attempt to analyze the relationship between certain theories of the dance, especially the theories of Loïe Fuller and her disciple, Isadora Duncan, and the theories held by some of the later Symbolist poets, notably Mallarmé and Yeats. Kermode ranges far and wide in his inquiry, into Miss Fuller's innovations with stage lighting—to which he ingeniously traces some of Yeats' lines, for he sees a link between her "Flame Dance," primarily a trick of lighting, and the poet's "agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve" in "Byzantium"—and into Anglo-Catholic arguments about the possible liturgical uses of the dance. It is in such essays, when enormous demands are made upon his learning, his patience, and his correlative powers, that the puzzles truly lead to epiphanies, and Frank Kermode is at his best.

—Robert Tracy

The Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence. By Eugene Goodheart. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 190 pp. $5.00. *The Deed of Life*. By Julian Moynihan. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 229 pp. $5.00.

THE PROBLEM that D. H. Lawrence raises for us is of a kind that many of the best writers of his generation pose for our generation. Like Pound, like Wyndham Lewis, like Yeats and Eliot to a lesser extent, Lawrence believed in, and made his art out of ideas which history forbids us to endorse. He was a part of that reactionary swing in the first third of this century that paradoxically produced a literary revolution, of which we are all the beneficiaries. But the movement also fostered social and political results which are less admirable, and we have inherited those ills, too. And so, while Lawrence could talk, with apparent confidence, about "dark fructifying powers," and the wisdom of the blood, we, forty years later, have seen what fruit those dark powers bore, and must, if we are rational, reject the idea that man can trust those forces in his nature which mind does not control. And so we are confronted, in Lawrence, with a case of the old problem of Art and Belief, a case

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made harder by the fact that Lawrence wrote a few novels which rank with the best of our century.

We might solve the problem, I suppose, by postulating *two* Lawrences: Lawrence-the-Maker, a poetic, if somewhat neurotic artist, marvelously responsive to sensory experience, and good on nature and emotional states; and Lawrence-the-Judge, at his mildest a critic of the evils of industrial society, at his worst a messiah-manqué. We could go on to observe that the Maker dominated Lawrence's work up through *Women in Love*, that the Judge took over for the next three novels, and that in the last fables – *The Man Who Died* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* – the two become one. Lawrence's biography, as it emerges from the letters, or as he wrote it in the "Nightmare" chapter of *Kangaroo*, will explain what happened to cause the change from Maker to Judge – war-time persecutions and the suppression of his best work alienated Lawrence from his own country, turned his sense of social injustice into a private sense of persecution and a destructive hatred of all mankind, and drove him to the physical isolation of a barren New Mexican mountain.

This sketch is a bit oversimplified, but it seems to me roughly accurate. Except that it avoids the central, sticky point – that both Lawrences are the same man, and that both are present in the best of his work. Lawrence was not simply a sane man who was driven mad by hardship; he was a troubled neurotic who lost control when the circumstances of his existence seemed to confirm his own neurotic inclinations (what can you expect, after all, if you persecute a man with a persecution complex?). There is already a good deal of the Judge in the beautiful, poetic early novels, and even the worst of the later messianic novels are not without lyric descriptions of landscapes. We can't simply lay the two Lawrences end to end; they insist on being judged together.

Lawrence is probably the best example in English writing of the way the creative imagination may transmute neurosis into art. He was a classic example of the Oedipus complex – mother-oriented, he desired to separate love and sexuality, to degrade and subjugate his sex-partners, to establish mystically homo-erotic relations with male disciples, and to place himself in the position of the father-authority. In his best novels, these symptoms are in one way or another the substance of the action: *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, and *Women in Love* are all about the difficulties of loving, and the pressures that both self and society interpose between individuals and their fulfillment. These studies of sexual and psychological relations between men and women are excellent because the problems they deal with are, if not universal, at least generally true, and because the characters embody the problems in action (Paul Morel, for instance, doesn't *talk* about an Oedipal fixation, he *acts* it).

In so far as Lawrence exists in these novels, he exists as a sick lover – as Paul Morel, or Birkin – aware that he is sick, and seeking health. In the three novels that follow, Lawrence elevated himself above his own action, and made himself the healer, mythologized himself into an heroic (and unreal) savior of men, a character out of the adoring mind of the Honourable Dorothy Brett, or Middleton Murry at his most discipular. This incredible hero he placed in exotic, usually primitive settings – in Australia, Italy, or Mexico – places which Lawrence did not know very well, but which seemed to provide appropriate contexts for the Dark Gods. Having separated himself from the reality of his own identity, and from the roots of his creative imagination in the only place he knew well – his English midlands – it is not surprising that Lawrence wrote badly. But it is surprising that Lawrence's life-affirming ideas of love and freedom and self-fulfillment could turn so readily into power and authority and self-abnegation. These three repulsive books – *Aaron's Rod*, *Kangaroo*, and *The Plumed Serpent* – are all in a sense political novels, though it might be more precise to call them messianic fantasies; in them the will-to-love is succeeded by the will-to-power (and its necessary correlative, the will to submit to the power of a leader). I don't see how any of them can be read in our time without horror and revulsion.

The messianic novels are not only intellectually ugly – they are also formally shapeless and slovenly: Lawrence's ego had swallowed his sense of fictional integrity. We can see how this happened, if we look at Lawrence's war-time letters. In a letter to the painter Mark Gertler, written in 1917, Lawrence wrote: "You say, 'it is life, life is like it.' But that is mere sophistry. Life is what one wants in one's soul and in my soul I do not want this wretched conglomerated messing, therefore I deny that that is life at all . . ." Now this sort of dissatisfaction with the life that is is certainly one motive for art, or at least for romantic art: the romantic artist – and Lawrence was one – constructs a world in his art which will correspond to "what one wants in one's soul." But if he is sane he knows that what he has constructed is not life, and that life remains a conglomerated mess for all his art. Lawrence, as the war made his life messier and messier, was less and less willing to acknowledge the life-art duality; he had increasingly the egoist's impatient desire to make the world conform to his will, he was "out of all patience with the submitting to the things that be." The outcome could only be frustration and rage at the world's indifference, and neglect of the formal properties which distinguish art from life. The messianic novels are novels in which will is everything, and action nothing (Lawrence described *Kangaroo* as a "funny sort of novel where nothing happens and such a lot of things should happen"); they prove, among other things, that the Dark Gods are doubtful Muses.

One of the remarkable things about Lawrence's ca-

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reer is that he managed to recover from the near-mania of this post-war period, and to write two more good books before he died. At the moment, the stock of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is rather down, partly I suppose because it is no longer a chic thing to own, but partly also because recent critics of the book have looked a bit more lingeringly at the famous sexual encounters, and have found them altogether less forthright and unambiguous than we all remembered. In fact, a substantial literature has grown up on the subject of exactly what Mellors is doing to Lady C.; the consensus is that it is, at the very least, unconventional sexual behavior.

All this re-examination is useful; it demonstrates, for one thing, how imprecise Lawrence could be when he was writing emotionally. And in a novel originally called *Tenderness* it is useful to learn that Lawrence's definition of tenderness wasn't everybody's. But these details should not distract us from the fact that *Lady Chatterley* is not so much a novel about sex as it is a novel of social criticism, in which sexual behavior is symptomatic of states of social health. (In a way, one might call the novel a reversal of the Freudian assumption: in Lawrence, sex is a symbol of something else.) The social criticism is not, to be sure, very original – we didn't need Lawrence to learn that industrialism is a life-denying system – nor is the cure that Mellors proposes – the tight scarlet trousers and the group dancing – a very hard-headed solution to the problem. But the point is that at the end of his career, as at the beginning, Lawrence was both Maker and Judge, concerned at once with the transcription of intense experience and with criticism of the modern world.

Consequently, we must include in our judgments of Lawrence both an awareness of his achievements as an artist and a recognition of his inadequacies as a thinker. In his casual writing – his letters, his psychological books, and the worst of his novels and stories – Lawrence-the-Judge is likely to dominate, and when that happens he is clearly in the stream of an ugly twentieth-century movement – the anti-intellectual, authoritarian, "blood-knowledge" strain that ended in Nazism. But in his best work he demonstrates – as Yeats and Eliot also demonstrate – that the true artist inevitably complicates and qualifies his most extreme ideas when he turns them into art. The problem that Lawrence saw – the problem of individual self-fulfillment in a dehumanizing modern world – is real, and brilliantly realized in the best novels. It was only when he turned to answers that he became shrill, irrational, and unhealthy. Perhaps the lesson is that, for our time, the art is in the problems, not in the answers. Or perhaps that has always been the artist's answer to experience.

Lawrence sets a difficult task for critics, just because he was both Maker and Judge. His art takes its form from the ideas; and the ideas draw their worth from the forms. So one cannot settle cozily down with formalistic analyses of his image-patterns, or be content to admire his handling of time, or point-of-view. But on the other hand, an approach through Lawrence's beliefs is likely to lead one to T. S. Eliot's conclusions: that Lawrence was incapable of what we ordinarily call thinking, and that he commonly drew the wrong conclusions from his intuitions. Somehow the critic must find a way of doing two kinds of judging at once.

Julian Moynahan has come very close to this ideal of Lawrence criticism, and has written a fine and permanent contribution to our knowledge of the works. He austerely warns us in his first sentence that "this book is a study of Lawrence's major works of fiction as works of art"; but in fact he spends a good deal of time examining and criticizing the ideas as they turn up in the novels. *Deed of Life* is a balanced, sensible, humane book, obviously written by a mature, intelligent man who knows how to write. Moynahan is a man with strong, clear opinions of his own, and by the end of his book you will know a good deal about him. This is not, I suppose, a virtue by New Critical standards, but I found it a nice change from the IBM impersonality of a lot of current criticism. I only wish – and I rarely wish this of critical books – that the book were a hundred pages longer. As it is, Moynahan has skimped here and there on the evidence he offers, and tends to assert Lawrence's originality where one would like to see it demonstrated. (What in fact did Lawrence do to the form of the novel? Has he had any permanent formal influence? I doubt it.)

About Eugene Goodheart, and *The Utopian Vision*, I must be a bit more severe. I quoted Moynahan's first sentence; well, here is Goodheart's:

> *This study is a complex elaboration of what appears to be a simple thesis: that Lawrence's imagination was oriented toward the future, that characteristic impulse was to discover new forms of life immanent, though not actual, in the world, and that his principal discovery was the bodily or physical life that he believed man had once possessed in his pre-civilized past and must now fully recover if future* civilized *life is to be possible.*

This sentence is no worse than many of Lawrence's, when he is in his messianic frenzy, but it doesn't strike me as the sort of prose that readers of literary criticism ought to have to wade through, and certainly Lawrentian prose is not the ideal medium in which to explain Lawrence. The "simple thesis" (in so far as I understand what it is) points toward Lawrence's thought rather than toward his art, and Goodheart has divided his book according to categories of ideas. This leads him to dwell on the non-fiction (there are more references to *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* than to *Sons and Lovers*); it also leads him into confusions which are really confusions in Lawrence's mind. The whole book has a good deal of the doctoral disserta-

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tion about it—a naive faith in intricate critical language, too many unnecessary footnotes, learned but irrelevant references, a tendency to depend on secondary sources, an unwillingness to say flatly that nonsense is nonsensical. It confirms some common views of Lawrence (though inadvertently): that he was self-contradictory, confused, and often preposterous in his role as a sage; that his style, which is often luminously poetic in the fiction, is gluey and congested in the non-fictional books; and that the Lawrentian ideas are best pursued through the novels and stories, where the creative imagination, and not the messianic will, is in charge.

—Samuel Hynes

The Beginning And The End. By Robinson Jeffers. New York: Random House. 74 pp. $3.95.

MANY STRICTURES against Robinson Jeffers could be grouped under one: tendentiousness, perhaps the most condemned item in the critical index of our time. Our aesthetic reveres the pure essence; it is anti-polemical, anti-programmatic, basically anti-subject matter. For us, propagation is propaganda, and we disdain it. Nevertheless, there is a certain genre, actually a very powerful genre, which is the direct product of the committed spirit, and a good case for the superiority of the English tradition in poetry can be made for it: the inflexible rectitude of its moral concern. And we do see this element deeply operative in Jeffers. In the mature work of his supreme middle years he hurled his indictments and asserted his pronouncements with pulverizing intensity. Now, in this last book of his life, assembled after his death by his sons and his literary executor, the tendentiousness persists, but it is more at the level of contemptuous rumination than of the original blazing asseveration.

Take, for instance, his well-known antipathy to Christianity. While not the main target of his indictment, it nevertheless figured everywhere in his work. He blighted his best poem with a puerile reference to "harps and habitations" behind the stars. The same animus is not absent from this final volume:

That all men are born free and equal: consider that!
And that a wandering Hebrew poet named Jesus
Is the God of the universe. Consider that!

I seem to be back in my boyhood, behind the stove at the corner store, listening to the village atheist spit tobacco juice through the parson's Sunday sermon.

This anti-Christian hostility is, of course, not hard to account for, considering the era of his religious indoctrination: hard-shell, arrogant, tail-of-the-century Old Testamentism locked in a death-struggle with an equally arrogant, equally implacable Darwinian scientism. Add to it a minister for father-figure, and you have a Puller-Down-of-the-Gods of no mean potential. Jeffers proved true to the form.

He is no God of love, no justice of a little city
like Dante's Florence, no anthropoid God
Making commandments: this is the God who does
not care and will never cease . . .

So he believed; and never realized that to speak of a God who "does not care" is about as "anthropoid" as you can get.

For it cannot be denied that, despite himself, Jeffers' attitude contained powerful residual Christian elements. Chief of these was his view of mankind isolated from the divine and fastened upon itself, inbreeding to its own vitiation and its own destruction. Jeffers' indictment of civilization was one the early Christians would have understood completely, however thoroughly contemporary ones are scandalized by the totality of such rejection. He is surely one of the great poets of Original Sin, a matter that should have made him fashionable with certain latterday esthetes. But he did not register his concern with the consolatory cultural finesse of, say, an Eliot. What Jeffers saw, not as a stimulating dash of cultural bitters, but with appalling clarity, was that mankind has turned its back upon the vision of God, and in consequence, like a disembowled hyena chonking down its own viscera, is consuming itself as it dies. True, Jeffers saw this God not as Jehovah but as Nature, but he saw that, Nature or Jehovah, the outcome is the same. He saw that only a humanity which contemplates unremittingly the divine Otherness can be whole, can maintain wholeness; that a humanity turned from contemplation inevitably becomes obsessed with itself, not as Other but as Only, a face in the mirror, and in this obsession consumes itself insatiably, imprisoned in the ghastly quicksilver of complacency, licentiousness and violence. In this sense his vision was profoundly Christian, whatever else it was. Nor does his pantheism throw him among the oriental mystics, nor any contemporaneous fashionable version thereof. In "On an Anthology of Chinese Poems" he complains, "But why do their rocks have no weight?" and asks, "Is it a moral difference perhaps?"

It is, indeed, for morality is the mode of the distinct Ego, seeing itself opposite the Other as an independent agent of knowledge and will. No, the subsistent Christianity of Robinson Jeffers, or rather his Old Testamentish reduction of it, runs too deep and ineradicable through all his verse to be discounted. A man cannot extirpate his religion merely by denying it. He saw the face of God in Nature, but he saw it as the unspeakable Other, and he gauged man against it. The proletarian critics of the Thirties, realizing this, denounced him, despising him as a fascist, and they have come to nought. The razzle-dazzle New Critics of the Forties attacked him, despising his work as unmitigated flannel-mouthed inflation, and they have come to nought. The fashionable existential critics of the Fifties ignored him, despising him as hopelessly

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simplistic and archaic, and they have come to nought. (I use the figure "come to nought" not in the sense that these movements are valueless, but that their opinions have not proved conclusive. "Nothing," someone has said, "dates so quickly as literary criticism.") Unchastened, Jeffers continued to delineate, in the tremendous vehicle of his verse, the fallen nature of man, its passion, its violence, incest, rapacity, perversity, cunning, compulsiveness and despair, its exaltation and catastrophe. In the primordial images of nature, over against the coagulation that passes for civilization, he saw and affirmed the majestic countenance of the divine, and few of this earth's too-few, have ever rendered it so superbly.

And so, inevitably, we arrive at the Final Work.

One always awaits the posthumous work of a great writer with apprehension. Has old age perhaps dispersed the powers of youth? Too often the energies that built a magnificent *corpus* are permitted to grind mechanically on, reproducing the idiom but not the inspiration of the master. Weighing *The Beginning and the End* in the hand, it is pleasant to record that the old fighter made it through.

Not that we are given the awesome spectacle of a Beethoven equaling if not transcending his periods of power; this book is a satisfying *coda* rather than an inimitable Last Quartet. But whatever can be scored against it (and the wearisome list of automatic censures may with equal misguided force be directed against this one) it cannot be said that it is tedious and dull. The idiom is there, surely, but the genius is there also. The marvelous energy remains unabated to the end. If the ideas are only slightly modified with the perspective of old age, the grasp of visual imagery is every bit as sure as it was in the days of his strength, and one is made aware in a strange new way of underlying rhetorical assets that the earlier intensity had tended to conceal. For instance, his ability to almost shamble through flat statement, yet somehow weaving all together into a comprehensive whole, bodying forth the substance of an attitude almost without devices, is remarkable. For one thing the book stands square because there is no minor narrative to deplete the cumulative effect. Instead, we have a book of emphatic shorter poems, the medium which many feel always evidenced Jeffers' greatest strength. Some of these come near to equaling anything he ever wrote for terseness and trenchancy. All of them summon up his inner potential of power, ruggedness, audacity, contemptuous disdain. That disdain is for literary success no less than for material complacency – utterly disdainful of the lost recognition once lavished upon him.

Still, the mood is somehow different, for all the didacticism. It is no longer that of a young man newly disillusioned with the idealism of his febrile youth and forging out a "true" perspective from the raw stuff of intuition. The mood is rather that of an old man stubbornly clinging to the opinions of his maturity, and asserting them over against the capacity of age for transforming opinion into wisdom. (One of the liabilities of age, one realizes, is this very refusal to accept the potential it inherently possesses, the potential which it alone offers for transforming perspective.) At a grosser level you see half-cracked old lumberjacks on Skid Row stubbornly clinging to the emblems of their productive vigor – tin hats, red flannel shirts, even defanged calk boots – obstinately refusing to concede that life has brought them any further perspective. This attitude is simply pride, and it is traceable here, mildly flavoring the old conviction. It shows itself mostly in the first section, wherein the didactic poems have been grouped. It is the poorest section, offending chiefly through the notorious tendentiousness, but still, for all that, powerfully expressed.

The other sections are better, particularly the one entitled "Autobiographical," the mood more lyrical, the keen eye whetted to the fine art of direct registration, and personal incidents told with marvelous delineation. If the sense of wonder and awe that occasioned the early great breakthrough are gone – that sense of revealment and almost inexpressible mystery of natural being that made such poems as "Night," "Continent's End," "Hurt Hawks," and so many others, masterpieces of intuitive expression – yet the energy remains, the undeviating capacity to say what is meant without equivocation. And that is great enough for any man to go out on. It might have been dull, fatuous and mediocre. Robinson Jeffers could never be mediocre. As if to perfectly sum up the implications of his life's whole magnificent achievement, the last lines of the book deliver it:

However – look before you go.
The wings and the wild hungers, the wave-worn skerries, the bright quick minnows
Living in terror to die in torment –
Man's fate and theirs – and the island rocks and immense ocean beyond, and Lobos
Darkening above the bays: they are beautiful?
That is their quality: not mercy, not mind, not goodness, but the beauty of God.

— Brother Antoninus

REVIEWERS

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